



Administrative Report

Office of the Manager, Communications and Organizational Development

To: Warden McNamara and Members of County Council

From: Renée Trombley
Manager, Communications and Organizational
Development

Date: Wednesday, October 21, 2020

Subject: COVID-19 Information Update

Report #: 2020-1021-CCS-R03-RT

Purpose

To provide County Council with an information update regarding communications and operations in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Background

Since the County's Emergency Declaration on March 22, the communications and organizational development department has shifted priorities and resources to address the ever-evolving needs of the organization during the pandemic. These have included a number of initiatives supporting and impacting services across the organization.

Discussion

As the pandemic has continued, information from local health officials and all levels of government has been in abundance and often rapidly changing. Administration noted early on that it was imperative to stay informed, as well as remain flexible in order to prepare our staff and processes to adapt accordingly to the new circumstances presented.

Communications

All-staff communications are prepared weekly, which includes the latest emergency orders, government updates, new processes and protocols, public health guidance messages and provides regular mental wellness resources and information.

Throughout this health crisis, the communications team has also assisted with external communications for the Sun Parlor Home, under the direction of the administrator, in order to provide regular, transparent and accessible communications for families of residents.

The team has also regularly connected with representatives of Ontario Health, local health officials, municipal representatives and external partners to share, strategize and disseminate pandemic-related information to residents. In addition, we continue to support public health messaging regularly via the County's social media channels.

Protocols, Policies and Procedures

As the pandemic has unfolded, a number of public health guidelines and best practices have been released that attempts to ensure protection against, and slowing of, virus transmission. The County has worked to incorporate these guidelines and procedures into business practices in order to protect employees and the public.

We have and continue to work with our HR department to formulate relevant COVID-19 tools, policies and protocols, based on best practices and public health advice.

Although this information can often change rapidly, we have devised several tools and shared information using easy-to-understand diagrams, posters and messaging. These tools, such as the County of Essex's Health and Safety Toolkit (Appendix A) helps to not only identify all of the actions the organization is taking to help mitigate the potential spread of COVID-19 for employees and in County facilities, but also tries to address any questions and concerns employees may have.

Other resources that have been developed include a COVID-19 program, outlining the County's expectation as it relates to employee practices such as physical distancing, regular hand washing, mask use indoors and more. The County has also developed a COVID-19 exposure protocol and procedure that details step-by-step the necessary actions to take as a supervisor or employee who may have been exposed to COVID-19.

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With the return of back-to-school, the County has also devised information surrounding frequently asked questions for staff and their families and has shared information from all local school boards in regard to their reopening plans.

The County is committed to sharing regular and timely information with staff and updates are posted regularly to County Connect, the staff intranet system.

Active Screening and Online Booking

The communications and OD team has worked to implement a COVID-19 active screening tool for all staff and visitors (with the exception of Sun Parlor Home and EMS paramedics who have an existing regulated process). This tool allows staff to self-assess daily prior to attending a work facility. Based on an individual's responses, the tool, similar to Ontario Health's online screening checklist, will determine if it is safe for an individual to be attending a facility, or if they should be following up with their supervisor and health care provider. The information, captured digitally, is helpful not only to identify any potential risks, but will also be extremely useful in the event of a possible COVID-19 exposure in order to facilitate contact tracing. This same tool has also been customized for use by the tenants of the Civic Centre and their staffs as well as for the eventual re-opening of County facilities to visitors, once it is safe to do so.

As the Province continues to gradually re-open, the County wants to ensure that public County spaces are available, but in a manner that is coordinated and measured, in order to uphold public health guidance and to be flexible in our responsiveness to potential outbreaks at County facilities.

The communications and OD team are also working to implement an online booking practice in order to better help regulate the amount of public traffic for departments. The Online Booking software allows for a slow and measured opening of County facilities (when appropriate to do so) to the public by encouraging appointments to conduct County business. This removes the 'at-the-door' traffic and with the online booking practice, residents will easily be able to schedule an appointment with a County department representative and in turn, the County can ensure that traffic flow is controlled, that an active screening has taken place, that proper space is prepared for social distancing and that enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocols can be enacted after each of these visits.

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This online booking practice is also currently being modified in order to facilitate the online scheduling of resident visits at the Sun parlor Home. This new practice will provide families an opportunity to quickly schedule a visit with their loved one via the County's website online, while also directly sharing all of the protocols and information they are required to review and understand before they arrive on site. This new process at the home, once rolled out, is expected to improve the efficiency of the current process which has been implemented due to COVID-19, while also providing an extra convenience for families.

Financial Implications

The financial implications to support staff communication and information needs regarding the changing provincial health directives and to implement new processes for all staff has been approximately \$40,000. These funds are expected to be offset by the Provincial Government's emergency funding for municipalities, as announced in August, as part of the Province's Safe Restart Agreement to address municipal operating pressures related to COVID-19.

Recommendation

That Report number 2020-1021-CCS-R03-RT, COVID-19 Information Update, be received by Council as information.

Respectfully Submitted

Renée Trombley

Originally Signed by

Renée Trombley, Manager, Communications and Organizational Development

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Concurred With,

Robert Maisonville

Originally Signed by

Robert Maisonville, Chief Administrative Officer

Appendix No.	Title of Appendix
A	County of Essex COVID-19 Health & Safety Toolkit