

COVID-19

Provincial Guidance on Inpatient Mental Health Units

All psychiatrists and residents are required to review the social distancing guidelines to minimize the spread of COVID-19. Please refer to <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-social-distancing.pdf>.

Over the coming weeks while schools and businesses are closed due to COVID-19, please consider the following:

- 1. Limiting off-ward pass privileges to minimal length of time (i.e. 15 min).**
 - Clinicians need to weigh the benefits of extended passes (i.e., assessing discharge readiness) vs. risks of extended passes exposing patient to individuals in the community with COVID-19.
 - If the individual requires screening for COVID-19, they will be required to be isolated, which can increase distress.
 - Patients returning from extended passes that are exposed to the virus in the community may expose other patients and staff on the unit.

- 2. Consider discharging the patient with virtual follow-up and family support instead of extended passes.**
 - The social distancing guidelines are in place during the next few weeks where most families are home because of school and work closures.
 - People are being asked to stay home and may be able to support an earlier discharge.
 - The Virtual visit and Virtual psychotherapy Tariffs enable physicians to support patients in the community while reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19 virus for patients and staff.
 - To assist with Discharge Readiness, the psychiatrist may decide to have an overnight pass and hold the inpatient bed for 16-24 hours. On the next day, instead of having the patient return to the hospital, the inpatient psychiatrist can do a virtual assessment to ensure that the patient is safely discharged. If required, frequent appointments by telephone/virtual assessments may be required during the first few days after discharge.

- 3. More information will follow with respect to virtual video conference assessments**