



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Halifax-Dartmouth

CMHA Halifax-Dartmouth Branch
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March 16, 2020

Dear staff, members, volunteers and stakeholders,

The Canadian Mental Health Association Halifax-Dartmouth Branch issues the following letter in response to the COVID-19 outbreak in our community.

As of this writing, there is one confirmed case and several presumptive cases of the novel coronavirus in Nova Scotia. Rest assured, we are doing everything we can to keep our staff, volunteers and members safe. We will follow the directives issued by the Government of Nova Scotia and do our part to reduce the transmission of the virus. This means we must make difficult decisions around our programming and day-to-day operations.

Staff

- Effective March 16, 2020, staff will be working from home until further notice.
- Staff should reconsider the necessity of in-person meetings and should strive to meet via phone or video conferencing.
- Staff were advised on March 13, 2020 that if they travel out of the country, they are to self-quarantine for 14 days upon their return.

Programs and Services

- Effective March 16, 2020, all in-person programming is suspended until April 6, 2020. Suspended programs include the Sharing and Caring Social Club, the Among Friends Social Club, the Mental Health Community Coffee House, and Building Bridges.
- Over the coming weeks, we will be exploring ways to adapt our programming to allow remote participation, either through the internet or over the telephone.
- Further details will be announced as the situation unfolds.

These decisions were not taken lightly. We are aware of the crucial role that our social programs play in maintaining the mental health of our members. However, we must also consider that many of our members are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 due to

underlying health conditions. To protect everyone involved we will need to provide our services differently.

We will be searching for ways to keep connected to our members without exposing our staff, volunteers and our members to the virus.

Please call the office 902-455-5445 to leave a message with any concerns and we will get back to you as soon as possible.

Guidelines for self-isolation if you are experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 are available here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-how-to-isolate-at-home.html>

If you are self-isolating as a result of returning from travel outside Canada, the Alberta government has produced a helpful guide:<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/health-self-isolation-information-sheet.pdf>

Some important things to help you during this pandemic:

- If you are sick, it is important that you seek medical advice through 811:<https://811.novascotia.ca/>
- If you may have been exposed to COVID-19, seek instruction from medical personnel and self-isolate.
- Proper hygiene and social distancing are currently the most effective preventative measures. This includes thorough and frequent hand washing with soap and hot water, avoiding touching your face, and maintaining a distance of 2 metres from other people. Frequent sanitizing of common surfaces areas such as refrigerator doors, microwaves, photocopiers, door handles etc. may also be effective.

This past week has been difficult for many. Please continue to take care of yourself and stay current by following the news and using the resources provided above. We will provide updates as the situation changes or as new government announcements are made. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Sean Ponnambalam
Chair, Canadian Mental Health Association Halifax-Dartmouth Branch