

SGEU Health Providers COVID-19 Pandemic Update



Thank you for the work you are doing as health providers:

SGEU Health Providers play a vital role in providing safe and quality health care. Our members are working in the eye of this storm and do their best to ensure the safety and provide quality care for residents, patients and clients in the health care system. For this dedication and quality service we thank all health providers for their work in these difficult times.

Safety in the workplace:

This situation is changing daily in Saskatchewan; due to the spread of the virus, new guidelines and precautions are issued regularly for the public and health provider employees. We ask all health provider members to follow the direction given by the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) and the Medical Health Officer.

Your SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee and your union are working to protect your rights to a safe workplace. In saying that, we remind you that it is the responsibility of the Employer to ensure the health and safety of employees and that you have the right to refuse unsafe work. We continue to advocate for the availability of the highest level of personal protective equipment for health providers, including the use of N95 respirators.

For Homecare Employees that are required to enter into private homes, you have the right to be informed if the homes that you are entering are under self-isolation. It is your right to know and to be provided with the information prior to entering homes.

To all SGEU Health Provider members with concerns about workplace safety, please refer to the following provisions in the Collective Bargaining Agreement:

27.03 Referral of Safety Concern

An Employee or a group of Employees who have a health or safety concern should endeavor to resolve the concern by first referring the concern to the immediate out-of-scope supervisor, who will investigate and take remedial action. If the concern is not resolved, it may be referred to a member of the Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

27.04 Safety Measures

Employees shall be supplied with and required to use all necessary tools, safety equipment, and protective clothing as required by the Employer and/or Occupational Health and Safety Regulations.

27.05 Right to Refuse Dangerous Work

Employees may refuse to do any particular act or series of acts, where they have reasonable grounds for believing it could be unusually dangerous to their health and safety or that of their co-workers, until steps have been taken to resolve the

matter or until the Occupational Health and Safety Committee or an Occupational Health and Safety Officer has investigated and advised otherwise. The worker may not be discriminated against by reason of the fact that she/he has exercised this right. An Employer may, however, temporarily assign the Employee alternate work, at no loss in pay, until the matter has been resolved.

SGEU Health Provider members returning from travel outside the country:

For SGEU Health Provider members who have travelled outside the country and returned on or after March 16, 2020, you must self-isolate for two weeks. For members who have arrived prior to that date, the SHA has deemed that you are to report to work and self-monitor; at the first sign of symptoms, you are to report to your manager and self-isolate.

SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee maintains the opinion that workers who have to self-isolate due to illness, travel or compromised immunity should be able to access paid leave without using sick leave. We have the following language in our Collective Bargaining Agreement which applies once the Medical Health Officer advises the provisions to be followed:

17.12 Immunization/ Communicable and Occupational Diseases

Any time lost as a result of:

- *immunization required by the Medical Health Officer in accordance with the Saskatchewan Immunization Manual or the Canadian Immunization Guide; or*
- *quarantine as determined by the Medical Health Officer; or*
- *being prohibited from working by the Employer as a result of exposure to an infectious disease as a result of her/his employment;*

shall not result in loss of pay or reduction of the Employee's sick leave credits.

In the case of Other than Full Time Employees, wages and benefits shall be based on scheduled shifts inside the posted and confirmed period. Outside the posted and confirmed period OTFT Employees shall be paid based on the average number of paid hours in the last fifty-two (52) week period preceding the date of such time lost. If the employee has been employed for less than fifty-two (52) weeks, the average number of paid hours will be calculated based on the number of weeks of employment, or as stated in her/his letter of appointment, whichever is greater.

Your Bargaining Committee continues to advocate that all front-line health providers should not suffer any loss of income due to quarantine or self-isolation measures.

Dealing with child care issues:

Following the announcement that Pre-K to Grade 12 schools will be closed indefinitely, many of you have childcare concerns. Your Bargaining Committee continues to hold discussions with the Employer on this issue. At this time, the SHA is asking that staff

look at contingency plans. In your SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Agreement, there are numerous leave articles which you may access depending on individual circumstances.

Consultation and discussions related to member concerns:

The SGEU Health Providers have been in daily discussions with the SHA and Health Ministry to address your concerns. We have also been in consultations with the National Union of Public General Employees (NUPGE) and the component unions from across Canada to share information.

What to do if you feel ill:

If you are experiencing symptoms and recently returned from travel out of country or out of province, or have been exposed to someone with COVID-19, it is advised that you stay home and use the self-assessment tool as supplied on www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus. This will help you determine if you should be tested for COVID-19. You can complete this assessment for yourself or on behalf of someone else, if they are not able.

Please note: You do not need to be tested for COVID-19 if in the past 14 days you have not travelled outside Canada or had contact with someone diagnosed as having COVID-19.

Symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing. If you have these symptoms, please access the Healthline 811 for instructions. (If you encounter technical difficulties, you can call 1-877-800-0002.) Do not go to the emergency room or medical clinic. If your symptoms require immediate attention, call 911.

General precautions and recommendations to help you stay healthy:

All members should be familiar with [self-monitoring](#) and [self-isolation](#) precautions, in order to keep you and those around you safe.

To protect yourself while out in public, wash your hands frequently and maintain a safe distance from others.

If you have no symptoms or exposure concerns, but have questions about COVID-19, you can:

- Access the most up-to-date news and information on www.saskatchewan.ca/coronavirus
- Email COVID19@health.gov.sk.ca

Again, we wish to express our most sincere gratitude and appreciation for all the care and selfless work that SGEU Health Providers and all health care professionals do on a daily basis. *It is true, that not all heroes wear capes, some of them wear scrubs or stethoscopes.*

To keep informed with SGEU Health Provider information, please download our SGEU Health Sector App (<https://www.sgeuhealthproviders.org/health-sector-app>), follow us on Facebook @SGEUHealthProviders, or visit www.SGEU.org.

In Solidarity,

SGEU Health Providers Bargaining Committee

Tracey Sauer, Chair

Diane Ralph, Vice-Chair

Jolean Brochu, Member, KTHR

Ryan Favel, Member, KYRHA

Wendy McPhail, Member, MCRRHA

Danny Hind and Kim Nordmarken, Labour Relations Officers