

COVID-19 Response Framework for Remote Reserves

This practical information and guidance is designed to reduce the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the on-reserve population based on the Covid-19 response framework for homelessness developed by a number of public health professionals, primary care physicians, psychiatrists, addictions medicine specialists. Further information on food and water was added by Norah Whiteway, Community Health at Wasagamack First Nation and Shirley Thompson, University of Manitoba.

Adequate procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE) for emergency workers and community health staff is needed with physical distancing with families isolating in homes and cabins.

The key pillars of the Response Framework include:

1. Testing:

- All people with a new or increasing cough, shortness of breath or fever, with OR WITHOUT travel history, should be sent to an assessment centre (not the health centre, where routine health visits occur, but a location dedicated to COVID-19 such as one portable at the school, community centre or building adjacent to health centre) for COVID-19 testing.

2. Health System/Shelter System Co-Ordination:

- **Health care system staff should be involved in planning with chief and council.**

Note: A robust communication system requires 1-2 contact points daily.

3. Covid-19 High Risk people (Elders, diabetes) require enhanced physical distancing

- All individuals categorized as high-risk (Elders, diabetes patients, etc.) need to be prioritized for enhanced physical distancing to public health directed standards to protect them from contracting COVID-19. Possibly using teacheridges that are empty and these people should not allowed to be within 2 metres of anyone other than health people.

4. Isolation Shelters for Persons Under Investigation for COVID-19

- Isolate people suspected due to symptoms or exposure need to include a private room and private bathroom in a separate safe facility if at risk to spread disease. COVID-19 TESTING MUST OCCUR PRIOR TO ADMISSION. With testing, people can be cleared of COVID-19 in 24-48 hrs; without testing, people require 14 days of observation.

Note: Isolation shelters will require on-site shelter workers, nursing support 16-24 hrs/day (health support), and peer worker support if treating addiction and telemedicine services. Dedicated transportation is needed to ensure no contagion.

5. COVID-19+ in Community-Based Shelter Care:

- Shelters specifically for COVID-19+ patients are required. These will not require physical distancing or private rooms, and thus could be large cohort facilities with congregate living. This could be the school or church or community centre or other facility.

6. PRIORITIZE WATER DELIVERY To prevent COVID-19, people need enough water to wash their hands regularly, which may be limited by their cisterns and barrels. Rationing of water by washing with reused soapy water in a bowl or bucket may spread disease.

RECOMMENDATION: Employ more people to deliver water, as well as sewage, increasing shifts from 1 to 2 , e.g., from day and evening shifts with 2 or 3 people on call for each vehicle/shift to ensure efficiency and back-up if people become sick.

7. FOOD: To keep people healthy over the long-term requires an adequate supply of healthy food, particularly local food by:

i. **INCREASE LOCAL FOOD SUPPLIES** through buying and distributing equipment and paying for gas dozens of people could be enlisted to fish, snaring/trapping and hunting and share the food.

ii. **STOCKPILE STAPLE DRIED FOODS**

- Rice (15 or 20 pound (lb) bags for each family or 300+)

- Oats and barley for breakfast and soup

- Dried Beans, split peas, split lentils.

- Dried Soup mix

- Baby formula and dried milk

- Hygiene and health products (toilet paper, soap, diapers, etc.).

- Canned fruit and root vegetables

ii. **CREATE AFFORDABLE ACCESS FOR HEALTHY FOODS** (work with Aki Foods, which gets nutrition north subsidy, to provide food for pop-up stores at band office or community centre or school during welfare/pay days and child benefit.

8. Traditional medicines: Fund local healers to pick, make and share traditional medicines.

9. Emergency workers - The Mino Bimaadiziwin partnership students are continuing to get their training allowance and could be enlisted to help with fishing every day, water delivery and delivering food or other emergency jobs. They would be required to use safety precautions (gloves, mask) and to keep a 2 metre physical distance.