



# Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)

## Information for GNWT Employees

**The global situation is changing rapidly.** The content of this communiqué is subject to change as the situation evolves. New or amended information will be distributed as necessary.

### What is COVID-19?

Human coronaviruses are common and are typically associated with mild illnesses, similar to the common cold.

The new coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is caused by a virus producing mild to severe respiratory infections. At this time, there are over 120 countries reporting confirmed cases of COVID-19 of which some are reporting community transmission. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared a pandemic. It is important that we prepare for the likelihood that the virus will spread further.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Most people with COVID-19 have mild symptoms. Symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure. Many people are presenting with flu-like symptoms such as, in order of frequency:

- fever;
- cough;
- shortness of breath;
- muscle aches; or
- fatigue.

#### Severe cases may have:

- difficulty breathing; and/or
- pneumonia;
- severe acute respiratory distress syndrome.

Individuals with fever, cough and/or difficulty breathing should seek medical attention.

#### Risk of severe disease may be higher for:

- Older adults
- People with chronic disease (for example: diabetes, cancer, heart, renal, or chronic lung disease)
- Those with weakened immune systems

## How does COVID-19 spread?

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets that spread when you cough or sneeze,
- Close, personal contact,
- Touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands,
- In rare circumstances, they have found the virus in stool.
- A close contact is :
  - a person who provided care for the person with COVID-19, including family, or other caregivers, and healthcare workers who did not use protective equipment; or
  - a person who lived with or otherwise had close contact (within 2 metres) with the person with COVID-19 while they were sick; or
  - a person who had direct contact with bodily fluids of the sick person (e.g. was coughed or sneezed on).

## What can I do to keep from getting sick?

We can reduce the spread of respiratory infections (this includes COVID-19), in our communities by practicing [healthy respiratory practices](#). This means you and your family should:

1. **STAY HOME** if you are sick
  - Wear a mask if you must go out especially if you are in a waiting room or in places with large crowds.
  - If you need to see your healthcare provider ask for a mask when you get there
2. **Avoid close contact** with others if you are sick
3. **Turn and cover your nose/mouth** with a disposable tissue for every cough/sneeze
  - If a tissue is not available cough/sneeze into your elbow
4. **Throw used tissues in the garbage**
  - If there is no garbage, carry a small plastic bag to put used tissues in and throw out later
5. **Wash your hands** for at least 20 seconds after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
  - Use alcohol-based sanitizer if no soap is immediately available
6. **Clean/Disinfect any surfaces or objects** you or someone else might have touched while sick. daily. (i.e. doorknobs, taps, toilets, light switches, elevator buttons, railings, cell phones, etc.)
  - Avoid sharing food, cups, glasses, dishes and cutlery

## What are the expectations of my employer in continuing to shake hands with co-workers, clients, or the public?

We advise practicing health respiratory practices. See:

<https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/sites/hss/files/resources/healthy-respiratory-practices.pdf>

GNWT employees are encouraged to forgo greetings involving physical contact (shaking hands/hugging) with co-workers, clients, and the public. GNWT employees are encouraged to greet people with an elbow bump, wave, or head nod.

## What do I do if you become sick or think I may have been exposed to COVID-19 or another disease while traveling?

If you have been travelling and you are sick you should tell your [health care provider](#). You should also tell your health care provider if you become ill after contact with someone who has travelled (particularly if that person has been ill). If you seek health care, wear a mask or ask for one when you get there.

Let your healthcare provider know:

- Your symptoms and when they started;
- Where you have been travelling or living;
- If you became sick while travelling or have become sick since returning home;
- If you have been in close contact with someone who is sick and was travelling; and
- If you have been in direct contact with animals or fluids (ie. droppings, blood).

## What do I do if either I or my family has recently travelled outside of Northwest Territories?

Employees returning from travel outside the NWT who have not visited Iran, Italy or Hubei Province, China should [monitor](#) themselves for symptoms like fever, cough, or difficulty breathing for 14 days after their return from travel. There is no [self-isolation](#) advisory for general international travel.

If you develop symptoms and have traveled outside NWT in the past 14 days, you are to inform your [health care provider](#) ahead of time so they can arrange a visit for testing for COVID-19. When you arrive at a health care facility, you will be asked to wear a mask so you can protect others. You should then stay home and [self-isolate](#) until you receive the results of the test. You should then follow the advice of your health care provider based on the results of the test.

**Employees/families who visited Iran, Italy or Hubei Providence, China in the last 14 days are to [self-isolate](#) for 14 days since their last day in those regions, even if they are feeling well.**

Self-isolation means staying home and not going to work, school, or social gatherings. If you or a family member develops fever, cough, or difficulty breathing during your [self-isolate](#), call a [health care provider](#) ahead of time so they can arrange a visit.

## What should you do if you have travel plans?

Stay up-to-date with the Government of Canada [travel alerts](#).

Take the appropriate preventive measures, such as:

- Washing your hands regularly;
- Avoid contact with animals (alive or dead);
- Avoid surfaces with animal droppings or secretions on them;
- Avoid contact with sick people, especially if they have fever, cough, or difficulty breathing; and
- Be aware of the local situation and follow local public health advice.

## Should I stay home if someone in my family is sick or [self-isolating](#)?

You should try to avoid close contact with family members who are ill or [self-isolating](#), as much as possible. If your young child, or an immediate family member requiring care, is ill or [self-isolating](#), Special leave may be used for this purpose.

## What type of leave will be available to me if I am symptom free but am to [self-isolate](#)?

**Special leave.** Where the Public Health Agency of Canada or the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer of the NWT advises [self-isolation](#) due to travel or possible exposure to COVID-19 and the employee is not ill, the employee will be able to access Special leave with pay.

## Will I need a “fit-to-return” to work medical certificate upon the completion of [self-isolation](#)?

**No.** If you have been symptom free during the recommended [self-isolation](#) period, you will not be required to provide a “fit-to-return” to work medical certificate as that would unnecessarily burden our medical system and cause unnecessary risk to possible exposure. Public health officials, however, will follow those who are [self-isolating](#) and direct people as to when it’s safe to end [self-isolation](#) and return to work.

What type of leave will be available to me if I am sick with cold and flu symptoms, am experiencing cold and flu symptoms and am awaiting COVID-19 test results, or have been confirmed to have COVID-19?

**Sick leave.** Employees experiencing symptoms of cough, fever, or difficulty breathing, experiencing those symptoms and are awaiting test results, or have been diagnosed with COVID-19 will have access to sick leave with pay.

Will I need a “fit-to-return” to work medical certificate if I was experiencing cold and flu like symptoms, was tested, and received confirmation of a negative test result for COVID-19?

**No.** It is the expectation of the GNWT that employees will follow advice and direction from their health care provider and will accurately communicate to their supervisor when they are provided advice that they may return to work.

Will I need a “fit-to-return” to work medical certificate before returning to work if I have tested positive for COVID-19, recovered, and now have tested negative?

**No,** if you have [self-isolated](#) and received two negative tests for COVID-19. It is the expectation of the GNWT that employees will follow advice and direction from their health care providers and will accurately communicate this to their supervisor before returning to the workplace.

What if I do not have any Special or Sick leave credits left and have already been advanced the maximum amounts permitted under my collective agreement/handbook?

Adherence to public health advisories and recommendations is of paramount importance in minimizing the possibility of community transmission during this public health event. It is the GNWT’s expectation that all employees will follow public health advisories and recommendations. To minimize any barriers in doing so, and on a without precedent basis, the GNWT will advance additionally required Special and Sick leave with pay to employees beyond the limits set out in the collective agreements and handbooks, to those who must [self-isolate](#), care for an immediate family member for reasons connected to COVID-19, who are experiencing cold and flu like symptoms, or who are diagnosed with COVID-19.

## Can my supervisor direct me to go home if they observe COVID-19 symptoms?

**Yes.** Managers and supervisors must ensure a safe work environment for all employees and will direct an employee to go home should they observe cold and flu like symptoms and will have access to Sick leave.

## Can I refuse to stay home for the full recommended [self-isolation](#) period?

If you meet the criteria for [self-isolation](#) and come to work before the end of the recommended time period, your manager/supervisor will direct that you go home and only return to the workplace upon the completion of the recommended [self-isolation](#) period. We are asking for your support in order to protect your colleagues and the public at large.

## Can I work from home during [self-isolation](#) or while caring for an immediate family member?

If you have VPN access and it is operationally feasible for you to work from home, yes you may be able to work from home with the permission of your Deputy Head.

## Will planned duty travel be cancelled or limited?

Effective immediately, all work-related travel to international and Canadian destinations outside the NWT will be suspended. All essential work related travel within the NWT will be approved only after a risk assessment has been conducted.

This is a precautionary measure to promote the health of our public servants and help reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 in the NWT. Employees are encouraged to participate in out-of-territory meetings or conferences via teleconferencing tools.

## Will the GNWT shut down offices if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in my community?

The GNWT's plan is to continue to provide its programs and services as normally as possible during any outbreak. As long as sick people are staying home and you are practicing good hygiene, you are at no greater risk of catching COVID-19 than in any other social setting.

If a lot of people in a particular community or office are sick, special arrangements may have to be made to ensure there is appropriate coverage. This may include taking on additional work or responsibilities that you are trained for in your own department. In some cases, employees may be asked to do work they are trained for in another department or for a community government. In some cases, you may be asked to travel to another community to deliver programs and services.

Normal procedures for overtime, acting pay and duty travel will apply if you are asked to do more work, do a higher paying job or travel to another community.

### Will annual leave be canceled or restricted?

There are no plans to restrict annual leave across the Public Service. Managers always have to make sure they consider coverage requirements when they get requests for annual leave, but there are no plans to cancel or restrict annual leave for individuals. As always, you can be called back to work if there is an operational requirement, but every effort will be made to avoid this.

### Where can I get the latest information about COVID-19?

The Department of Health and Social Services is the best source for accurate and up-to-date information about COVID-19. Any questions about symptoms, how to reduce the spread, and what to do if you think you are sick or think you may have been exposed to COVID-19 can be answered by referring to information on the Health and Social Services website at <https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/covid-19>.

**The global situation is changing rapidly. The risk of acquiring COVID-19 in NWT remains low at present. For the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 see the [Government of Canada website](#). This is an evolving situation, and we will provide updates with new information as it becomes available.**

For further reference:



ALL CORRECTIONS SERVICE STAFF  
DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE

### **COVID-19 Response – Corrections Service**

Given the heightened concerns over COVID-19, we want to assure all staff that contingency plans are in place and are being updated as the situation unfolds. Standing Orders/Directives have been updated for all correctional facilities and community corrections offices. Additional processes and procedures are being put into place to assist in this area.

In the interest of the health and safety of our staff, inmates, offenders and the public, the following precautions are being put into place for a minimum of 14 days (to be reviewed on an ongoing basis and as more information becomes available), effective Wednesday, March 18, 2020.

The following measures will be implemented:

**1. Volunteers**

Use of volunteers in correctional facilities and community corrections offices will be suspended (e.g. community AA).

**2. Work Crews/Appointments**

The activities of any facility off grounds work crews will be suspended. Essential appointments will continue as scheduled (e.g. medical).

**3. Temporary Absences (TA's)**

All temporary absences to/from correctional facilities will be suspended (e.g. work release).

**4. Visitors (personal)**

All personal visits for inmates/offenders will be suspended.

**5. Legal Counsel/Spiritual Advisors/Elders**

Confidential in-person meetings with official visitors (such as lawyers, spiritual advisors, Elders) will be accommodated as much as possible in exceptional circumstances, without permitting direct personal contact. The Visitor and Contractor Questionnaire must be completed prior to entry.

**6. Contractors**

Contractors providing essential services within the correctional facilities (physical building) will be permitted; however, the Visitor and Contractor Questionnaire must be completed prior to entry.

**7. Community Corrections Reporting**

Community corrections clients will be reporting by telephone. Each office will be responsible for notifying their local community RCMP detachment of this policy change.

**8. Corrections Northern Recruit Training Program (CNRTP)**

CNRTP at the NSCC is scheduled to begin April 1, 2020, though the program may be cancelled or rescheduled as necessary.

**9. Leave**

Staff leave requests will continue to be considered based on operational requirements. Due to the evolving nature of COVID-19, previously approved leave may be subject to change to ensure we are able to maintain our facilities operational requirements.

**10. Inmate Transfers**

Regularly scheduled road transfers within the NWT will be suspended; however, air transfers will be considered, when required on a case-by-case basis.

These measures apply to all correctional facilities and community corrections offices in the Northwest Territories.

These measures are being made in consultation with public health officials, other correctional jurisdictions, and best practices, and will be reassessed on an ongoing basis. The GNWT is monitoring the status of COVID-19 in the NWT, and the Corrections Service will ensure that employees are updated as new information becomes available.

The GNWT has supports in place through the Employee Family Assistance Program. For immediate and confidential assistance 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, call 1-844-880-9142 or visit [www.workhealthlife.com](http://www.workhealthlife.com).

If you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact your Supervisor, Warden or Regional Manager.

I would like to thank everyone for their professionalism and ongoing hard work during this time.



Blair Van Metre  
Director of Corrections  
Department of Justice

Additional resources:

NWT Public Health Website:

<https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/advisories>

Coronavirus Updates:

<https://www.hss.gov.nt.ca/en/services/coronavirus-disease-covid-19/information-travellers>

GNWT Public Safety Notice:

<https://www.gov.nt.ca/en/public-safety-notices>

GNWT Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update for Employees website:

<https://my.hr.gov.nt.ca/node/5577>



## COVID-19:

### **Pandemic Screening Procedures for all staff entering Department of Justice Correctional Facilities.**

All staff members are expected to abide by the requirements set out in this document. These procedures will be updated as necessary. Follow the directions of screening personnel, and arriving early for your shift will help prevent delays.

#### **All staff:**

- 1. BEFORE reporting for work:** Self screen by asking yourself if you have any of the following:

Most people with COVID-19 are experiencing these symptoms:

- Fever
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath

Other symptoms those with COVID-19 have had are:

- Generally feeling unwell
- Muscle aches
- Fatigue
- Sore throat
- Runny nose
- Headache
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Loss of sense of smell

- 2. If you DO have symptoms**

- Call your manger/supervisor to alert them of your symptoms and that you will not be in for work
- Stay home and monitor your symptoms



- Follow the guidance from the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer regarding monitoring/self-isolation

### 3. If you **DO NOT** have symptoms

- Report for work at the screening door
  - Staff screening door at the NSCC will be the **Adult Services Administration Foyer area**
- Perform hand hygiene with hand sanitizer, or ensure washing of hands in the washroom for 30 seconds using soap and hot water
- Cooperate with screening staff
- Review the screening documents
- Answer screener questions
- If staff have to leave the facility for any personal reasons and no symptoms have not appeared you do not need to redo the screening process.
  - If any staff member starts to experience symptoms they must report it to their supervisor and vacate the complex immediately

### 4. If staff are called in outside of the hours for designated screeners you must make arrangements to meet with the Deputy Warden of Operations prior to entering the security envelope:

- Required for any staff that are coming into NSCC after regular screening times, generally staff that are late, relief staff called in, etc
- You may enter through the front door of Adult Services for screening in the Administration Foyer
- Perform hand hygiene
- Remain in the foyer while waiting for the screening assessment
- Attend **the screening tables for assessment by the Deputy Warden of Operations once the DWO or designate is ready for processing**



**5. If you finish your shift and return on the next day (Not required if doing a double shift)**

- Report for work at the screening door
  - Staff screening for all NSCC staff will be at Adult Services entrance in the Administration Foyer
- Perform hand hygiene
- Cooperate with screening staff for a quick experience
- Review the screening documents
- Answer screener questions

**Screening Staff**

1. Follow the process for screening laid out in the document titled: **DOJ Staff Screening Process – COVID-19**
2. Follow screening process above for yourself as a staff member when you arrive to work.
3. Report staff that does not pass the screening process to the appropriate individual detailed in the **DOJ Staff Screening Process – COVID-19** document.