

COVID-19 PANDEMIC PRECAUTIONS STATEMENT

Last Updated: April 30, 2021

Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic Period has been a challenging time of uncertainty for all of us. It has been a challenge for the people supported by Sunbeam, their families and support networks and for staff who are constantly navigating the health and safety risks and new precautions being implemented to fight the virus. It must be recognized that COVID-19 presents serious risks to all Ontarians, and heightened risks for people with developmental disabilities, especially those living in congregate settings such as group homes.

Intellectual and developmental disability and COVID-19 case-fatality trends: TriNetX analysis

Conclusions - Though of concern for all individuals, COVID-19 appears to present a greater risk to people with IDD, especially at younger ages. Future research should seek to document COVID-19 trends among people with IDD, with particular attention to age related trends.
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7245650/>

While it has been very difficult on families and the people Sunbeam supports to have limited and modified contact with one another, the vast majority of families have adhered to, and have been understanding and supportive of the health and safety precautions Sunbeam has taken throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic Period. On behalf of Sunbeam, it's Board of Directors, its dedicated and compassionate workforce, and all persons served, **thank you** for your understanding, your willingness to adapt and your trust in us to be guided by the most current expert pandemic advice from health and government authorities in consideration of the unique and varying risks presented by our persons supported.

CDC – Centers for Disease Control and Prevention / People with Disabilities / People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders

People with developmental or behavioral disorders who have serious underlying medical conditions may be at risk of serious illness
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-withdisabilities.html>

Sunbeam is the only developmental services provider in Waterloo Region that provides specialized services for medically fragile / technology dependent (MFTD) individuals in its residential group home programs. Due to Sunbeam's long-established clinical expertise, the majority of individuals supported at its congregate living sites tend to have greater complex clinical care needs compared with individuals supported at other local developmental services organizations. During the COVID-19 Pandemic Period, this has created a heightened risk of virus transmission, illness and mortality for this population.

Legislative Framework

Sunbeam Community & Developmental Services is a service agency under the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act (SIPPDA). As such, it has clear legal obligations under sector-specific legislation as well as under the Provincial emergency orders, as amended from time to time.

Section 7 of SIPPDA requires that all service agencies comply with policy directives issued by the Ministry, including those related to performance standards and measures with respect to the provision of services and supports. Therefore, Sunbeam is required to follow Ministry directives related to COVID-19. Under SIPPDA Quality Assurance Measures, Sunbeam is required to develop and maintain policies and procedures around health promotion and support the well-being of people supported. The Ministry of Children Community & Social Services has issued more than ten (10) directives to service agencies throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic Period to-date. The directives use clear, obligatory language with respect to public health precautions and visits to congregate care settings.

Under Ontario's Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA), Sunbeam, as an employer, is required to "take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection" of its staff, including group home staff. As such, Sunbeam must implement public health measures that reduce the spread and transmission of COVID-19, including introducing public health precautions that persons supported must comply with to the best of their abilities as well as any person visiting a group home.

Under section 9 of O-Reg. 177/20: Order Under Subsection 7.0.2 (4) of the Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act - Congregate Care Settings, all "guidance, advice or recommendations" from the Ministry of Health and Chief Medical Officer of Health are legally binding on Sunbeam. This means that Sunbeam must follow public health direction on what public health measures apply in group homes such as physical distancing, PPE use, screening and more.

Sunbeam also understands and recognizes its legal obligations under Ontario's Human Rights Code, including its obligation to accommodate people it supports. Sunbeam has always and continues to use an individualized approach to accommodation in its application of all its policies prior to and during the Pandemic Period. Sunbeam has kept the lines of communication open with families about making best efforts to adhere to the protocols and precautions in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Furthermore, Sunbeam's use of a comprehensive risk assessment for visitors takes into consideration the relevant risk dimensions, the unique circumstances of the person supported, the visitor, the assessed pandemic risk in the local community as determined by the province and public health, and the assessed risk of the particular site involved (related to a number of factors related to vulnerability of all residents residing there). Considering and notwithstanding the above obligations, Sunbeam has taken a flexible, individualized approach to supporting its persons supported and keeping everyone safe.

Our Commitment

Sunbeam appreciates the immense challenges individuals and families have faced, and continue to face, in adjusting to the health and safety measures and precautions which place limits on visits with loved ones, and which have required some changes to how services are delivered across all program areas of Sunbeam. As such, Sunbeam has consistently taken into consideration the unique circumstances involved in each situation and remains flexible and collaborative in its approach to navigating the COVID-19 Pandemic Period, while balancing the health and safety of all persons supported and Sunbeam staff. We recognize that it must be a collaborative process, and where one public health measure may create a barrier to meaningful engagement, other available measures should be explored through a lens of assessed risk and safety for all.

Since the outset of the global COVID-19 pandemic, Sunbeam has consistently exceeded the expectations of, and served the complex and varied needs of the individuals and families supported in the communities we serve through actions and strategies including:

- ✔ Implement all directives, guidelines and recommendations for pandemic precautions from health and government authorities
- ✔ Proactively implement many Human Resources strategies and initiatives to provide opportunities and supports to our valued staff, and which in turn enhanced our ability to provide the care and services that our community relies upon, especially during these challenging times
- ✔ Develop innovative program delivery options to continue serving the needs of individuals and families who rely on support from the Sunbeam community, such as:
 - ✔ extremely popular virtual day programs, in-group-home day programs,
 - ✔ virtual / video supports and services through Sunbeam Developmental Resource Centre (SDRC) and Developmental Services Ontario Central West Region (DSO),
 - ✔ establish iPad lending libraries across all program areas to better enable access to programs and services, and so much more
- ✔ Worked in collaboration with local and provincial government, health and public health authorities as well as partnering closely with sector specific networks
- ✔ Provide consistent and timely communications to all Sunbeam stakeholders via the “COVID-19 INFO” page at: www.sunbeamcommunity.ca/covid-19-information/
- ✔ Advocate for prioritization of vaccinations for individuals living with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and their caregivers.
- ✔ Take a lead role in operating Developmental Services Pop-Up COVID-19 Vaccination Clinics in Waterloo Region which brought vaccinations to our local sector in late March / early April of 2021; the Sunbeam-operated clinics alone administered 1,030 first vaccinations to persons served and their caregivers, with second dose vaccinations to come by July
- ✔ Arrange and/or administer over 380 COVID-19 PCR Tests, cumulative, to end of April 2021 for persons served and staff of Sunbeam, based on comprehensive screening protocols
- ✔ In-house staff surveillance testing (COVID-19 PCR Tests) performed in December 2020

- ✔ Sunbeam named as an IPAC Champion for local MCCSS-funded organizations, to serve as a first point of contact subject matter expert to assist other organizations with inquiries related to IPAC / COVID-19 pandemic precautions and processes
- ✔ Most recently, Sunbeam is launching its Rapid Antigen Testing Program (Rapid COVID-19 testing) in May 2021 to further strengthen its health and safety protocols at its congregate living sites and all other program locations.

We recognize now more than ever that the actions of one or few can have significant and serious impacts on many, as we navigate the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic environment.

In the provision of supports and services to vulnerable individuals, especially within congregate living programs, the positive choices of front-line staff and the positive and sometimes difficult decisions of families of persons supported are critical to ensuring the ongoing safety and wellness of everyone in the Sunbeam Community.

Sunbeam's commitment to our stakeholders and our community remains unchanged.

Sunbeam Community & Developmental Services *Statement of Values*

We Believe In:

Openness - An open culture creates a deeply respectful, honest and joyful working environment.

Responsiveness - With thoughtfulness we proactively engage our opportunities and challenges.

Communication - Great communication is a cornerstone to our success as an organization.

Being Planful / Analytical - We believe it is necessary to be intentionally strategic in all our goal setting, planning, operations and service delivery.

Collaboration - Working together towards shared success leads to the best possible outcomes.

Please accept our sincere appreciation to everyone in the Sunbeam Community as we collectively support the safety, health and wellness of the many exceptional individuals and families we serve.

It is only through our continued commitment to quality, service, compassion and safety that we will see our way through to a better future full of hope and opportunity.

Sunbeam Community & Developmental Services