

Date:	January 7, 2021
To:	Primary care providers
From:	Pam Mulroy, Executive Lead, Primary and Community Care, and Dr. Rakel Kling, Medical Health Officer
Re:	Changes to Public Health COVID-19 case and contact management

The recent surge in lab-confirmed COVID-19 cases in the Northern Health region has put pressure on Public Health case and contact management (contact tracing) resources.

The backlog of people who have tested positive for COVID-19, but have not yet been contacted by Public Health, has improved greatly since [December 17, 2020](#).

To address these challenges, Northern Health has:

- Deployed additional staff to case and contact management teams
- Refined and streamlined processes to ensure efficiency in case notification, monitoring, and discharge from self-isolation.
- Collaborated with primary care providers with regards to clinical health monitoring and clinical management of patients who are COVID-19 positive

This work has resulted in the following changes to Public Health case and contact management, designed by the Northern Health Medical Health Officers:

- **Public Health will:**
 - Call to notify everyone who tests positive for COVID-19 of their result, as soon as possible.
 - Triage and do a public health risk assessment (risk stratification process) of all positive cases.
 - Advise a positive case when their self-isolation is complete.
 - Gather information on, and notify, close contacts (contact tracing) only in cases in high-risk settings (including health care facilities, long-term care homes, industrial camps, First Nations communities, and; those that are part of a known cluster or outbreak, etc.).
 - This will ensure public health can respond quickly to developing clusters of cases or potential outbreaks.
- **Public health will not:**
 - Conduct daily clinical health monitoring for COVID-19 cases and contacts.
 - Directly notify household close contacts, or other close contacts outside of the high-risk settings listed above.

Primary care providers will receive notification of their patients who test COVID-19 positive through EMR to EMR or EMR to fax.

We're asking primary care providers to:

- Continue to refer patients for testing according to BCCDC guidelines and inform patients of positive results.

- Complete clinical health monitoring and clinical management of attached COVID-19 positive patients.
 - Primary care providers will determine the frequency and process appropriate for the patient.
 - There is no expectation that any report of clinical health monitoring be provided to Public Health.

How will unattached patients be supported?

Primary care providers can determine a process locally to manage unattached patients, or alternatively, unattached patients can be supported through Northern Health Virtual Clinic (1-844-645-7811).

Questions?

We will continue to work together with the Medical Directors, Chiefs of Staff, Divisions of Family Practice, and all other primary care providers to respond to the case and contact management process changes.

A [frequently asked questions document](#) has been developed for further information.

Please contact Pam Mulroy at Pamela.Mulroy@northernhealth.ca.