

COVID-19 Safety Plan – Policies and Procedures

At Together Speech, we are committed to delivering services that continue to keep our clients, therapists and staff as safe and healthy as possible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Together Speech Transition Safety Plan – BC Restart Plan, Step 3 (until the start of Step 4)

This document outlines Together Speech and Language Services Inc.'s Step 3 COVID-19 Safety Plan, Policies and Procedures. The following guidelines are in accordance with those outlined by the College of Speech and Hearing Health Professionals of BC (CSHBC), the Provincial Health Officer (PHO), the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC), and WorkSafeBC. For up-to-date information about Covid-19 please visit the HealthLink BC <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca> and the BC Government COVID-19 site <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/covid-19/info/response>.

All clients must 1) complete a health screen and 2) understand the safety protocols prior to their therapy session. These protocols were developed with the goal of reducing the risk of exposure to the virus that causes Covid-19 for the clients and therapists within our clinical setting.

Our safety plan has been thoughtfully developed to meet infection control guidelines in order to minimize risk, however, some risk of transmission remains with any face-to-face visit. Any clients starting with in-person sessions will be required to sign an informed consent liability form acknowledging this risk and waiving any liability that Together Speech and Language Services Inc. may have in this regard.

RISK ASSESSMENT

Together Speech specializes in community-based services where therapy is provided in homes or other community locations. Identified risk factors include:

- Therapy often involves being in close physical proximity with clients. This can involve physical play and participating in shared activities that involve exchanging of toys and materials.
- Sessions are typically for 1 therapy hour within an enclosed, indoor space.
- Therapists visit a number of clients a day, usually at the clients' home. Clients may live with large extended families that include older adults in the home.
- We serve a diverse population that include clients who may be over 60 years old. Some clients have compromised immune systems due to their diagnosis or health condition.
- Toys and materials were previously transported between sessions with only soiled or mouthed materials put aside for cleaning.

We are hopeful that the province will be heading into Step 4 of the BC Restart Plan soon. As the situation continues to change, Together Speech will be following closely and will update this document as needed to reflect updates and changes from CSHBC, BCCDC, WorkSafeBC and the BC Ministry of Health.

In-person Guidelines

SERVICE DELIVERY

- Clients, therapists and staff are free to continue accessing services virtually based on preference and availability.
- In-person services will be considered on a case-by-case basis at the treating therapist's discretion based on a risk assessment of various factors, including but not limited to: client's level of vulnerability, risk of exposure to the clinician, assessment of appropriateness of virtual services, and urgency of client's need.
- Outdoor settings continue to be recommended during this transition period.
- While therapists are transitioning to in-home/indoor sessions, services may include a combination of virtual, in-home and outdoor sessions based on scheduling and availability.
- For in-person sessions, Together Speech specializes in home-based and community-based services. Our availability depends on where clients live and their schedule as we have different SLPs working in different areas on different days.

PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT – During this transition time:

- Our therapists will continue to wear face masks for each session.
- **We ask that any adult joining the session continue to wear a mask for the entirety of the session upon entry of the therapist.**
- Clients should wear masks whenever possible. We understand that, for various reasons, this may not always be appropriate for younger children or clients who cannot tolerate masks.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING / ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- Clients and staff are encouraged to respect others' personal space. Please continue to avoid close greetings like hugs and handshakes.
- For in-home/indoor sessions, clients or parents/guardians are encouraged to provide a therapy space with ventilation (e.g., an open space or a room with a window open).
- Clients or parents/guardians should provide a clean space where therapy sessions can take place.
- Our therapists will be scheduling appointments to allow for adequate time between sessions to properly clean and sanitize items before the next appointment.

HEALTH GUIDELINES / PRE-SCREENING

- Symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other respiratory illnesses and seasonal allergies. An appointment must be cancelled immediately if either the client or therapist experiences any symptoms or feels sick.
- **Therapists will email a simplified health screen that must be completed prior to the in-person session.**
 - The following can be used as a guideline: If you answer "YES" to any of the following questions, your session should be cancelled and rescheduled for a later time or changed to a virtual appointment.
 - (1) In the past 14 days has anyone in the home traveled outside of Canada?
 - (2) Have you been asked to self-isolate or have been in contact with anyone with confirmed COVID-19?
 - (3) Does anyone in your home have: A fever? Cold or flu like symptoms (i.e. cough, runny nose, sore throat, loss of sense of smell/taste, headache or muscle aches, fatigue or loss of appetite)? Unusual shortness of breath? Is experiencing nausea, vomiting or diarrhea?
- Our policy for cancellations required with 24 hours' notice, still stands. However, exceptions will be made on a case-by-case basis, and options for virtual therapy will be available if cancellations are necessary.

*****A reminder that as per the Together Speech's general infection control policy, if anyone in the household is experiencing any cold or flu symptoms, such as a runny nose or sneezing, sessions should be cancelled and rescheduled*****



HAND HYGIENE

- Our therapists will practice hand hygiene with appropriate hand washing procedures or use of hand sanitizers upon entering and exiting each home.
- Please continue to practice good hand-hygiene at home: Clients and parents/guardians will be required to ensure appropriate hand washing procedures or use of hand sanitizers before beginning the session, when there is any visible contact with their faces during the sessions, and after coughing, sneezing, using a tissue, or eating.

CLEANING & SANITIZATION

- Our therapists will be limiting the number of items and materials brought into your home. Our therapists will ensure that all the transported, shared equipment and materials are cleaned and sanitized between use. This includes toys, books, electronics and other materials used.
- Clients or parents/guardians should provide a clean space where therapy sessions can take place as well as provide access to materials and/or toys that are available to be used during the session.

INFORMED CONSENT

**** All staff, therapists, parents, guardians and clients must understand that while we are taking the recommended measure to prevent the spread of infection, we cannot reduce the risk of infection to zero. ****

- Due to the risks involved with COVID-19, an informed consent liability form acknowledging this risk and waiving any liability that Together Speech and Language Services Inc. may have in this regard will be required for clients to acknowledge understanding that:
 - Any therapy services include some risk of COVID-19 transmission.
 - The therapist is following protocol to help reduce or mitigate risk where possible, but that risk cannot be reduced to zero.
 - The client consents to having in-person services despite understanding the risks involved.
 - The therapist will document the client or guardian’s consent at each session.
 - The client or guardian has read and understands the procedures and plan outlined in Together Speech’s COVID-19 Safety Plan.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please contact us at info@togetherspeech.com.

Thanks for your assistance in helping us keep our clients and their families, as well as our therapists safe and healthy!