

COVID-19 – Update – March 26 2020

On March 16th, New Brunswick's Chief Medical officer implored all New Brunswick residents, public service, and private business owners to take unprecedented measures to save lives. On March 18th, the NB government declared a State of Emergency that has been updated on March 26.

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Corporate/pdf/EmergencyUrgence19.pdf>

The declaration states: **Regulated health professionals are prohibited from providing in-person services except those they deem essential for the health and wellbeing of their clients. The offering of services is permitted conditional on compliance with all applicable control measure in the NB...COVID-19 Guidance for Primary Care Providers...**

<https://www2.gnb.ca/content/dam/gnb/Departments/h-s/pdf/COVID-19GuidancePrimaryCareProvidersCommunitySetting.pdf>

...The regulated health professions are...psychologists...

CPNB is aware that psychologists working for the Health Authorities, Correction Services, and possibly others have been told by their employers that they are "essential services". As of March 26th, it is up to each psychologist (**in the public sector or in private practice**), in consultation with their employer when applicable, to determine which services are urgent and essential, with the understanding that non-essential health services that require physical contact should stop during the State of Emergency.

For psychological services that are not considered "essential", there are several things to consider, from ethical, moral, and legal perspectives. We are currently charting new territory in many ways given this novel and overwhelming circumstance.

Supervision

With respect to supervision, the current rules state that *"formal supervision shall be on a regular basis during the period of supervised experience...individual supervision consisting of one hour of face to face supervision and one additional hour of learning activities per week for a total of eight hours per month."* In the current State of Emergency, CPNB certainly approves of the use of technology for supervision rather than face to face contact. Supervisors should,

however, document in their reports which sessions were electronic and note any difficulties meeting face to face requirements caused by COVID-19.

Client Service

Psychologists from several settings have made the decision to only see clients via telepsychology, to postpone or cancel non urgent sessions, to waive last-minute cancellation fees, to not charge for sessions that are not given because the client refuses telepsychology, etc. In the current crisis, this seems like the most ethical approach for non-essential or urgent situations.

Considerations

CPNB recommends using a paid private web conference network such as, but not limited to, Skype Enterprise, Zoom, WebEx or Adobe Connect. These networks require the use of a password and an access code for your customers. Without prohibiting it, the CPNB does not recommend the use of Skype (free version) or FaceTime. CPNB believes that closed or private paid networks offer better computer security because they are encrypted. However, the fact remains that any web platform can theoretically be hacked. Clients must therefore be informed of the risks inherent in the use of these technologies and consent to their use in an informed manner.

It is expected that regardless of the medium used for service delivery, psychologists practice within the limits of their competencies and review standards of practice, such as those listed below. Also, when choosing to use communication technology, members should review information about the technology with respect to confidentiality and security. When obtaining informed consent, members should clarify and document any relevant potential limitations or issues posed by the use of the technology.

Telepsychology between provinces/territories

CPNB is part of a signed understanding amongst the four Atlantic provinces regarding the practice of telepsychology. As CPNB members, you are allowed to offer telepsychology services to a resident of another Atlantic province, but before doing so, you must inform the College of the other province of your name, contact info, and license number. Also, Quebec allows psychologists from other provinces to practice telepsychology with their citizens without needing to inform

the OPQ. For all other provinces and territories, you generally need a courtesy license and must contact them directly for that. However, given the current pandemic, most psychology boards are allowing psychologists/residents/interns to continue services even if the client has temporarily relocated to another province. We recommend inquiring with the board of the intended jurisdiction before continuing services.

Additional resources

For further guidance, members using electronic means to provide service are referred to the Association of Canadian Psychology Regulatory Organizations (ACPRO) Telepsychology Standards that have been adopted by CPNB.

http://cpnb.ca/wp-content/uploads/Resources/ACPROTelepsychology_Model_Standards_June%202011.pdf

Information from the Chief Medical Officer of Health

The Chief Medical Officer's website also has information for the general public: https://www2.gnb.ca/content/gnb/en/departments/ocmoh/cdc/content/respiratory_diseases/coronavirus.html

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