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| **Version** | **Date** | **What’s Changed** |
| v.1 | March 17, 2020 | First Release |
| V.2 | March 24, 2020 | Updates to: Definitions (Self-Isolate, Isolation Period, Social Distancing), social distancing and self-isolation required actions and vacation and leave request information. |
| V.3 | April 7, 2020 | Added: What information is best and mental health resources sections  Updated: Employee Family Assistance contact information and Leave Information |
| V.4 | May 4, 2020 | Added information on the Agency COVID website, updated event information, updated wording related to symptoms |
| v.5 | May 12, 2020 | Vacation Updates |

**Introduction**

To support staff through uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and its impacts, we have prepared this COVID-19 Employee Guide.

As our governments work to address any existing confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Canada and limit the virus’ spread, our primary line of defense as individuals is education. Please take a moment to read this guide, and share it widely with your colleagues. As new information is available, this guide will be updated.

For more information, please visit:

<https://www.alberta.ca/COVID19>

<https://canada.ca/COVID19>

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/>

Alberta Health Services Health Link: 811

Agency COVID-19 Portal Information <https://covid.cssalberta.ca/> or go to Portal🡪Quick Links

**What information is best?**

The COVID-19 pandemic has resulted in an avalanche of information. Information is available from many sources: friends/family, colleagues, from the news and via social media.

To support our response to COVID-19 good information hygiene is as important as good hand hygiene. To practice good information hygiene please:

* Check your sources carefully.
* Avoid spreading rumors or incomplete information.
* Minimize the amount of time you spend on news and social media.

For work, staff may receive information from many sources, the Federal government, from affiliates/coordinating networks or professional bodies. This can cause confusion if information is contradictory.

As an Agency Catholic Social Services relies on Alberta Health Services (AHS).

In particular where there is a **contradiction between multiple sources of information** please apply AHS guidelines.

AHS resources are available via their COVID-19 website

[Novel coronavirus (COVID-19)](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx)

[Information for Albertans](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx)

[Resources for Health Care Workers](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16947.aspx)

AHS Posters

[Help Prevent the Spread Posters](https://open.alberta.ca/publications/covid-19-information-help-prevent-the-spread-poster)

[Posters for Health Workers](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17000.aspx)

[AHS Information in different languages](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page17038.aspx)

**Terminology**

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| **Term** | **Definition** |
| **Hand Sanitizer** | Alcohol based hand sanitizer which consists of greater than 60% ethyl alcohol. |
| **Hand Hygiene** | Washing hands frequently with soap and water or using alcohol based hand sanitizer. |
| **Incubation Period** | The time from the moment of exposure to an infectious agent until signs and symptoms of the disease appear. For example, the incubation period for chickenpox is 14-16 days. |
| **Respiratory Hygiene** | Coughing/sneezing into a tissue or your elbow/arm. |
| **Seasonal Influenza** | Commonly known as “the flu”, is a highly contagious infection of the airways caused by influenza viruses. These viruses circulate annually during the winter season in the Northern Hemisphere. |
| **Transmission Mode** | Infectious diseases are commonly transmitted through direct person-to-person contact. |
| **COVID-19** | A new strain of coronavirus. It is a virus that has not circulated in humans before. |
| **Self-Isolate** | Stay at home and monitor yourself for symptoms, even if mild, for a period of time to avoid contact with other people to help prevent the spread of disease in your home and in your community in the event you become symptomatic. |
| **Isolation Period** | The time you are required to avoid contact with other people. |
| **Social Distancing** | Changes in your everyday routines in order to minimize close contact with others, including:   * avoiding crowded places and non-essential gatherings * avoiding common greetings, such as handshakes * limiting contact with people at higher risk (e.g. older adults and those in poor health) * keeping a distance of at least 2 arms lengths (approximately 2 metres) from others, as much as possible |

**Agency Resources and Contacts**

See table below for important Agency resources and contacts for any concerns or questions related to COVID-19.

Existing policies on [Infection Control Precautions](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/media/36776/section_5_-_human_resources_management.pdf), [Health Care](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/media/36767/section_2_-_client_service_delivery_management.pdf), and [Protected Leave](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/media/36776/section_5_-_human_resources_management.pdf) may be found on the employee Portal.

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| --- | --- | --- |
| **Resource** | **Purpose/Use** | **Contact** |
| **Your Supervisor** | General Questions | Your Supervisor |
| **Occupational Health and Safety** | For information related to Occupational Health and Safety. | Diane Hildebrand  Director, Health and Safety  [Diane.Hildebrand@cssalberta.ca](mailto:Diane.Hildebrand@cssalberta.ca)  Your Joint Occupational Safety and Health (JOSH) Committee Representative |
| **Disability Management** | For information related to sick leave. | Jerada Black  Disability Management Specialist, Human Resources  [DisabilityManagement@cssalberta.ca](mailto:DisabilityManagement@cssalberta.ca) |
| **Employee Portal** | For Agency updates related to COVID-19 | Agency COVID-19 Portal Information <https://covid.cssalberta.ca/> or go to Portal🡪Quick Links |
| **Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP) – Homewood Health\*** | For information related to the Employee and Family Assistance Program | [Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP)](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/human-resources/group-benefits-pension/additional-staff-benefits/agency-employee-and-family-assistance-program-(efap).aspx)  Go to Portal and click on Human Resources then Additional Staff Benefits  Homewood Health:  1-800-663-1142  <https://homeweb.ca/> and then log in to Member Services |

\* Additional information on EFAP services and mental health supports is listed at the end of this document.

**Background Information**

Coronaviruses are large families of viruses that cause respiratory illness in humans. Depending on the individual, symptoms may be mild or severe.

Novel coronaviruses, like COVID-19, are types of the virus that have not been detected in humans previously. Because of this, humans do not have built-up immunity against the virus and no treatment or vaccine is available.

COVID-19 was first detected in Wuhan, China in winter of 2019. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 a pandemic due to the speed and scale at which the virus has spread globally.

For many individuals COVID-19 symptoms present as a mild cold, with recovery in a few days. Symptoms include:

* Fever (temperature greater than 38C/100.4F);
* Dry cough;
* Extreme tiredness;
* Sneezing, running nose
* In severe cases, difficulty breathing.

COVID-19 has an incubation period of up to 14 days, meaning it can take up to 14 days to develop symptoms after being exposed to the virus. The virus is spread through:

* Respiratory droplets when you cough or sneeze.
* Close personal contact (touching, hand shaking, hugs).
* Touching something with the virus on it, and then touching your eyes, nose, or mouth before washing your hands.

**Catholic Social Services Response to COVID-19**

As the world responds to the ever-evolving COVID-19 pandemic new developments emerge repeatedly and frequently. This disease involves uncharted territory and our concern extends to one another and those most seriously impacted by the virus.  There is naturally an elevated level of concern among the general population, and at times like this a sense of composure is especially called for so as to enable us to remain focused, even-keeled and vigilant.

Questions and concerns also abound at such times. To help identify and address those questions and concerns with accuracy, consistency and coordination, we have formed a Crisis Cabinet which consists of our Senior Executive Team, all Vice-Presidents, and our Directors of Human Resources, Health & Safety, Information Technology, Development and Community Relations and Infrastructure and Asset Management.  This group will meet twice weekly, and additionally if needed, to plan, respond and adapt as new information becomes available and conditions change.

Agency-wide communications on our pandemic response will come from Troy Davies, CEO or Eoin Murray, our Director of Development and Community Relations. Information that is more specific to individual service areas will come from your Vice Presidents. Please keep a regular watch on your email and Portal for updates and announcements.  Should you have any questions, please direct them to your immediate supervisor.

Throughout this pandemic our Agency will be guided by Alberta Health Services (AHS) and the province’s Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMO), Dr. Deena Hinshaw.  The Crisis Cabinet is working through a large volume of issues related to the pandemic and its potential implications for the Agency, as well as working through the ramifications of the CMO’s recommendations.

In the coming days, with the probability of a large number of employees unavailable to work as a result of self quarantine requirements or by the closure of schools and daycares, we will be assessing the most critical services and redeploying available staff to focus on the continued care of our clients. We will be implementing working from home, where possible.

In accordance with the Government of Alberta’s recommendations, all agency-wide and program-specific events that were scheduled to occur before September have been cancelled.

Select mandatory training such as first aid, CPR and non-violent intervention will continue to ensure the safety of our clients. All non-mandatory training will be cancelled. Additional precautionary measures will be implemented for training that continues. The Vice Presidents will communicate more details on this to their teams.

While health officials still advise that the likelihood of exposure remains low, we are procuring significant quantities of Personal Protective Equipment (gloves, masks, etc.) for direct care staff. Given high global demand for such items we will distribute available supplies on the basis of priority needs and provide information on when appropriate to use.

**Infection Prevention and Control**

While our municipal, provincial, and federal governments continue addressing COVID-19 on a large scale, it is critical that individuals follow the actions below to prevent the spread of infection. Actions below are based on guidelines from Alberta Health Services.

Existing Agency policy on [Infection Prevention and Control](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/media/36776/section_5_-_human_resources_management.pdf) can be found on the Portal.

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| **Activity** | **Action** |
| **Social Distancing** | Practice social distancing techniques. Here are some tips. <https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-social-distancing-fact-sheet.pdf> |
| **Hand Hygiene** | Wash your hands often with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds.  If hand washing facilities are not available, clean your hands using an alcohol based sanitizer with a minimum of 60% ethyl alcohol.  Avoid shaking hands and hugging. |
| **Coughing/Sneezing** | Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough/sneeze. Immediately dispose of the tissue and wash your hands.  If you don’t have a tissue, cough/sneeze into your arm/elbow.  Avoid coughing/sneezing into your hand (wash your hands immediately if you do.) |
| **General Hygiene Practice** | Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.  If you touch hard surfaces (door handles, tables, fridge handles, etc.) wash your hands with soap and water or disinfect them with hand sanitizer. |
| **Environmental Decontamination** | Disinfectant wipes may be used on telephones, keyboards, and other hard surfaces. |
| **Self-Isolation** | If experiencing any symptoms of illness, have been traveling outside Canada or have been advised that you have been in direct contact with someone diagnosed with Covid19, stay away from work and avoid public places for a period of 14 days.  All other individuals with symptoms are now instructed to self-isolate for 10 days (not 14) until symptoms cease. If symptoms persist past 10 days, self-isolation must continue. |

*Based on information from Catholic Social Services, Alberta Health Services, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the World Health Organization.*

**Best Practices:**

* Wash hands often with soap and water for a minimum of 20 seconds.
* Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
* Cover coughs/sneezes with a tissue, immediately dispose of the tissue and wash your hands.
* Cough/sneeze into your sleeve.
* Do not share dishes, glasses, utensils, towels, or other items with others. Wash these items thoroughly after using.
* Regularly clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces, such as desks, counter tops,

**Just the Facts**

It can be difficult to determine what information regarding COVID-19 is true and what is false. More than ever, it is important to verify the information you are receiving and sharing related to COVID-19 to ensure everyone has the necessary accurate information to protect themselves and their loved ones. See below for some quick facts, which will be updated as new information comes out.

1. There is no race or ethnicity more likely to contract COVID-19 than others.
2. 80% of individuals who are infected by COVID-19 will recover without needing special treatment. *(*[*Alberta Health Services*](https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16997.aspx#sign)*)*
   1. People most at risk for developing serious symptoms are those who are elderly or those who have pre-existing medical conditions, such as diabetes, lung disease, or heart disease. *(*[*Centre for Disease Control*](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/share-facts-h.pdf)*)*
3. You can help protect yourself and others by:
   1. Washing your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds, especially after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
   2. Covering your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then immediately disposing of the tissue and washing your hands.
   3. Avoiding touching your mouth, eyes, and nose, especially with unwashed hands.
   4. If you have any symptoms, stay at home.

**What do I do if I have symptoms of COVID-19?**

Under no circumstances should staff members attend work if they are experiencing a fever. If you are experiencing mild respiratory symptoms, contact your supervisor immediately and do not come to work.

If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing and have travelled outside Canada, or are a close contact of someone who has COVID-19, complete the COVID-19 [Self-Assessment online](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx) right away. Based on the outcome of this assessment you may be directed to self-isolate and contact Health Link 811 for further instructions about testing if required.

Unless you are experiencing severe symptoms, do not go to a physician’s office, health care facility, or lab without checking with 811 first. Most cases of COVID-19 will clear up with time, unless you are a member of one of the outlined at-risk populations. Entering public spaces while experiencing symptoms is a public health risk.

If you are experiencing symptoms and are a member of one of the identified at-risk populations, or have travelled outside of Canada recently, call Health Link 811 to discuss next steps.

If you are experiencing severe symptoms, seek medical attention immediately. Severe symptoms can include:

* Difficulty breathing, shortness of breath;
* Consistent pain or pressure in the chest;
* Blueish lips or face

**Travel, Vacation and Leave Requests**

Effective immediately, the following travel restrictions are in effect for Catholic Social Services and Catholic Charities employees.

**Agency Travel Restrictions**

Business-related travel outside of Alberta is prohibited until further notice. Naturally, Lloydminster employees are exempt from this restriction insofar as accessing Saskatchewan.

**Personal Travel**

While the Agency cannot prevent an employee from making a personal trip, an employee’s decision to travel may impact the employee’s ability to gain future access to work in any Agency location or worksite.  Each employee must make this decision. The Agency will not bear the costs associated with decisions to cancel personal travel unrelated to work or any quarantine period required after the travel has occurred. Case by case exceptions may be granted by the employee’s Vice President or Senior Executive Officer.

**Vacation Requests**

To ensure business continuity and workforce planning preparedness, it is essential we have sufficient staffing available to serve vulnerable clients in critical areas and to maintain agency operations. Accordingly, and with the exception of those on leave for self-quarantine purposes, any new requests for extended vacation of 4 days in length or more will be declined.  This strategy will be regularly reviewed, but will remain in effect until further notice. Please note, however, that any vacation leave requests already approved will be honored. Requests for vacation or leave of 4 or more days will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the employee’s Vice President or Senior Executive Officer.

**Update-** Firstly, we committed to regularly revisiting the recent limitation imposed on vacation for periods of longer than 3 days. We now feel confident lifting that restriction, effective this coming Monday. Your vacation requests are still subject to approval from your Service Area Vice President, who will take into account service area needs when making decisions. I hope that this change will allow staff to gain some extended rest and relaxation and the opportunity to enjoy what brings you joy outside of work.

**Leave Requests**

To ensure business continuity and workforce planning preparedness, it is essential we have sufficient staffing available to serve vulnerable clients in critical areas and to maintain agency operations. Accordingly, and with the exception of those on leave for self-quarantine purposes or requesting job protected leaves as per Alberta Employment Standards, any new requests for leave of absence will be denied. For employees with extenuating circumstances, exceptions may be made with the approval of the Vice President.

**COVID-19 Compensation and Leave**

**Compensation and leave information**

When compared with citizens of many other jurisdictions or employees of many other organizations, we are grateful for the benefits and supports we have available as employees of Catholic Social Services. With this spirit of gratitude in mind, please refer to the Compensation and Leave FAQs for detailed information on options available to employees.

Recently, the Government of Alberta said changes will be forthcoming with respect to leave and employment standards, as prompted by the pandemic.  We will provide further updates and quickly make the necessary adaptations to our Agency plans as the Government implements these changes and the specifics are made known.

**Employee Responsibilities and Expectations**

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| --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Responsibilities and Expectations** |
| **Front-line or administrative staff** | * Inform your supervisor as soon as possible if you are experiencing symptoms * Stay home if you are experiencing symptoms * Attend work if you are healthy and not on an approved leave * Practice hand hygiene to prevent the spread of illness * If you are not working report your absences in Kronos. * Contact [disabilitymanagement@cssalberta.ca](mailto:disabilitymanagement@cssalberta.ca) to find out the necessary forms and processes to submit any applications for Short Term Disability to Sunlife or to EI, if applicable. |
| **Managers & Supervisors** | * Report Covid19 related absences to your program manager. Program Managers report absences to your Vice Presidents. * Be there for your employees. Ensure that employee concerns and questions are being answered. Seek answers by contacting your Vice President. * When absent, ensure a designate is available to carry out these responsibilities. * Continue to monitor attendance levels of staff and assess the impact of absences on the provision of service. If services are impacted or are likely to be impacted, be sure to immediately inform your Vice President. * Consider operational impacts of employee requests but exercise flexibility when considering request for leave, particularly if the employee has a person in care who is ill. * Maintain confidentiality of medical information. Avoid sending emails to various persons discussing details of an employee's absence / travel history * Communicate information to staff as it becomes available. Direct employees to their email or to the Portal for the most up to date information. * Maintain a calm work environment. * Maintain a respectful workplace. * Continue to record employee absence in Kronos |
| **Occupational Health and Safety Committee members** | * Lead the organization through pandemic planning exercises for their respective areas. * To ensure you and your staff have the latest information, please regularly review your email and the Portal and direct your employees to their email and the Portal. * Investigate any reports of unsafe working conditions * Provide guidance on the deployment of, and use of, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and additional cleaning and disinfection protocols introduced as part of the additional Covid19 measures taken * Ensure additional PPE and cleaning supplies are ordered. |

**Mental Health Resources**

For many of us, our loved ones, or for our clients the COVID-19 pandemic may be a source of anxiety. It is natural to feel anxious during times like this. To help mitigate this anxiety please try to focus on making time for activities which nourish you: safe-time with people you love, exercise, fresh air/time in nature, being cautious with news and social media, prayer, meditation and laughter can all prove valuable.

Please take time to use the resources available to you as a staff member in Catholic Social Services.

**Employment and Family Assistance Program (EFAP) through Homewood Health**

#### Our EFAP program offers a range of resources which you can access, such as

#### [COVID-19 Response: Homewood i-Volve for Anxiety](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/media/341250/homewood.pdf): i-Volve Online CBT is a bilingual, web-based solution designed to treat employees struggling with anxiety and/or mild depression. i-Volve will help employees to identify, challenge and overcome anxious thoughts, behaviours and emotions.

#### Counselling Services: EFAP supports all Catholic Charities and Catholic Social Services employees and their immediate family members (spouses, partners, and dependent children). It is a free, confidential program that offers Agency personnel short-term counselling and support related to a wide variety of issues including relationships issues, depression and anxiety, stress management, grief and bereavement, work and family balance, parenting, gambling, substance use, and work-related problems. This counselling is available face to face, by telephone, or through on-line e-Counselling.

#### Lifestyle and Specialty Services: EFAP lifestyle and specialty counselling services are provided for a variety of life balance and health issues, including care-giving, life planning, and health coaching services for issues such as childcare and parenting, elder and family care, smoking cessation, weight management, and nutrition. EFAP can also provide counselling support in the areas of career planning, financial, and legal consultation.

#### Online Resources: Homewood ﻿﻿Health™ is able to offer our staff and volunteers access to online resources through its Member website. Through this website, our personnel can access e-Learning resources; interactive tools; health and wellness assessments; and a library of health, life balance, and workplace articles.

You can access Homewood Health™ by calling 1-800-663-1142. This toll-free number is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. **Employee participation is voluntary, anonymous, and confidential.**For more information on our EFAP service and for access to all of the Homewood ﻿﻿Health™ e-services, visit <https://homeweb.ca/> and then log in to Member Services.

For details about each of the different services that Homewood Human Solutions offers, download the [Catalogue of Service Descriptions](http://staff.signofhope.ab.ca/media/116956/catalogue_of_service_descriptions.pdf). If you have any questions please contact your HR department at 780-432-1137 or by email to [HRbenefits@cssalberta.ca](mailto:HRbenefits@cssalberta.ca)

**Alberta Health Services – Mental Health Resources**

AHS has produced a variety of information and supports specific to the pandemic.

* Mental Health Tip sheet including tips, phone numbers for support in the community and other ideas for keeping well. (<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/info/amh/if-amh-mhpip-disaster-pandemic-covid-19-and-your-mental-health.pdf>)
* 30 Days of Self Care Calendar [<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/about/balance/ahs-balance-30-days-self-care.pdf>]
* Phone numbers <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/amh/Page16759.aspx>
* Text COVID19HOPE to 393939 for daily, uplifting text messages.

**Sunlife**

Our insurance provider also has a range of resources which you can access, such as:

* Access to the Wellness Site through the plan member site. This provides access to a Health Risk Assessment tool and other health related products. To use the Wellness Centre go to Sunlife’s home page and select Wellness Centre.
* Free Virtual Care for plan members available from May 1, 2020 until June 1, 2020
  + <https://www.sunlife.ca/static/canada/Sponsor/About%20Group%20Benefits/Focus%20Update/2020/939/939_Focus1.pdf?WT.dcsvid=NTI2NDYzMTgxMzQ0S0&WT.mc_id>=
* Free pharmacy home delivery with McKesson Canada
  + [https://www.mckesson.ca/en/specialty-pharmacy-services](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.mckesson.ca%2fen%2fspecialty-pharmacy-services&c=E,1,NuTtjsME0xmod2uKZh8T-dwalDrgxK0HayNizAZbZHrxfqXFTtmyroY4bMYKaUj1UDJuNJyG5Y1upvrdmCc2ofaNh5LRvdj8-NBMdatCD_2RqfLsFTWusdGxPA,,&typo=1)
  + <https://www.rexalldirect.ca/?___store=meditrust_fr&___store=meditrust_en>
* Mental Health Support: [https://www.sunlife.ca/Canada/sponsor/Group+benefits/Group+benefits+products+&+services/Mental+Health+in+the+workplace?vgnLocale=en\_CA](https://linkprotect.cudasvc.com/url?a=https%3a%2f%2fwww.sunlife.ca%2fCanada%2fsponsor%2fGroup%2bbenefits%2fGroup%2bbenefits%2bproducts%2b%26%2bservices%2fMental%2bHealth%2bin%2bthe%2bworkplace%3fvgnLocale%3den_CA&c=E,1,GO4jafPUbXmLXf8Gf9Sp2cjkPfKlX0nBarohnrVq5LyaqRo6JhZfinV50_VdLC05C-5Fkp3GugI5goWvOmXRxcFC1cWCV9gxRU7TZdhm-Jfw_zzZvaJgXi0,&typo=1)

Additional information and tools is available on their website by going to: <https://www.sunlife.ca/ca/Tools+and+Resources?vgnLocale=en_CA>

**The Canadian Commission on Mental Health**

The Canadian Commission on Mental Health is a national non-profit organisation. They have established a COVID-19 resource hub [<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/covid19>] which provides a range of resources on topics including:

* Mental Health for Carers [<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/sites/default/files/2020-04/fact_sheet_caregivers_eng.pdf>]
* Workplace mental health [<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/what-we-do/workplace>]
* Self-care and resilience guide [<https://www.mhfa.ca/en/blog/mental-health-first-aid-covid-19-self-care-resilience-guide>

Choosing good information sources during COVID-19 [<https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/news-article/13920/choosing-sources-information-carefully-critical-covid-19-mental-well-being-says>