

Phase 3: Has Your Workplace Transitioned Its COVID-19 Safety Plan To A Communicable Disease Prevention Plan



On July 1, 2021, B.C. moved into Step 3 of its COVID-19 Restart Plan. As part of this phase, B.C. employers are no longer required to maintain a WorkSafeBC approved COVID-19 Safety Plan. Instead, they are required to transition to a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan.

What is a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan?

It is a plan that outlines the steps an employer is taking to reduce the risk to their workers from communicable diseases in their workplace. To assist employers in understanding what a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan should include, WorkSafeBC has issued [Guideline G-P2-21 Communicable Disease Prevention](#), which provides guidance as to the expected contents of the plan, which include:

1. Policies to support staff who may be sick with a communicable disease;
2. Maintaining a clean environment through routine cleaning;
3. Ensuring building ventilation is properly maintained and functioning as designed;
4. Providing hand hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies and signage to encourage hand washing regularly; and
5. Supporting employees to receive vaccinations for vaccine-preventable conditions by providing up to three hours of paid leave to be vaccinated for COVID-19.

As part of the communicable disease prevention plan, employers should, on an ongoing basis, identify specific risks to the workplace or region from a particular communicable disease and tailor their policies and procedures to reduce the risk of exposure to workers. The implementation of additional measures may be required as advised by Public Health.

How does a Communicable Disease Prevention Plan differ from a COVID-19 Safety Plan?

A Communicable Disease Prevention Plan is more general in nature. Unlike a COVID-19 Safety Plan, it is not specific to a single disease. Instead, it details actions and controls that an employer has put in place to address the risk posed to workers by communicable diseases generally. While broad in nature, an employer may choose as

part of its Communicable Disease Prevention Plan, and indeed it is advisable to develop an addendum or companion to their plan to address the risk posed by a specific communicable disease. For instance, in the current climate, employers choosing to continue certain COVID-19 controls may want to outline such controls in an addendum to their Communicable Disease Prevention Plan. They can then amend the addendum to reflect the reduction of controls as the risk to workers from COVID-19 diminishes.

Do Communicable Disease Prevention Plan have to be approved by WorkSafeBC and posted on the employers' website?

No. There is no requirement for WorkSafeBC approval, nor is there a requirement to post your Communicable Disease Prevention Plan on your website. However, as part of their broad inspection powers, WorksafeBC officers may require an employer to demonstrate that they have practices in place to prevent the spread of communicable diseases in the workplace. Moving forward, the Communicable Disease Prevention Plan will be the foundation for policies and procedures on future pandemics and outbreaks.

by Michelle S. Jones (Vancouver) and Kimia Jalilvand (Summer Student) (Vancouver)
Lawson Lundell LLP