

BCASW Letter to Members

Dear BCASW Member

As we move through Social Work Week, we are faced with the necessity of re-thinking our practices and habits. The commitment to unity in inclusion and strength in diversity is especially highlighted as we find ways forward through the COVID-19 crisis.

Risk assessments must now be made on a continuous basis. Safety for you, your clients, and community is paramount. Choices currently need to be made using a crisis management lens with new information in mind. Updates on the evolving COVID-19 crisis can be found at the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) and [Healthlink BC](#). Social distancing is key to harm reduction as the virus spreads.

For some practitioners, telephone counselling may be a viable alternative to in-person sessions; ideally with a phone that is plugged in. Cell phones are not secure; however many people use cell phones exclusively and may be most comfortable communicating by means such as FaceTime and texting. Skype is frequently used but cannot be considered secure. Telephone or internet systems may go down due to overload, prompting the implementation of a mutually agreed alternate means for communication. Please keep security in mind as you connect with clients alongside the awareness that safety concerns may override security. According to our code of ethics, "a social worker shall maintain the best interest of the client as the primary professional obligation."

In this context and for the longer term, additional remote alternatives to face to face contacts for providing services to clients are required. The BCCSW provides standards for the profession of social work in BC. BCASW is in communication with the BCCSW in regards to social work practice in times of widespread crisis. Current standards are in the process of being reviewed for crisis management and updates. The *Technology Standards of Practice* date from 2016 and do not address 2020 realities but they do contain valuable information and best practices. Please review them as you explore alternatives for providing services.

BC's access and privacy laws address the protection of information. The *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (FIPPA) for the public sector and the *Personal Information Protection Act* (PIPA) for the private sector outline privacy and information laws.

Our commitment to continuing professional development remains in place despite the postponement of our conference. Knowing that cybercounselling and the use of video in practice are important areas of skill development, BCASW will continue to seek ways to support learning in these areas.

Our staff is working from home and will respond to email sent to bcasw@bcasw.org as soon as possible. Unfortunately we are unable to respond to telephone calls at the moment.

Frustration may increase as plans go amiss and information can be outdated as soon as it is communicated. A gentle reminder to all to be supportive rather than critical as we scramble to adjust to changing circumstances.

Stay safe and well.

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