

Updated: March 27

To all CUPE members in the Community Health sector,

Thank you for the meaningful work you do every day—especially right now. Like all British Columbians we appreciate the critical work of our health care members, and no more so than during an extraordinary crisis such as the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. We are all under significant stress as we cope with constantly shifting circumstances for our families and communities during the crisis, and health care workers are under the greatest stress of all. You are the line of defense between COVID-19 and the general public. If there is anything we can do to support you, please let us know.

B.C.'s health care system is on heightened alert to contain and slow the spread of COVID-19. As the situation evolves, the Ministry of Health, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) are providing new information on a daily basis.

To assist you further during this difficult period, we want to provide the most accurate and up to date information relevant to your work in health care. Please visit CUPE's Community Health website for general information about COVID-19 for CUPE members in Community Health, including frequently asked questions and other resources. There's also help available for CUPE members in need of [income supports](#).

CUPE National has also responded with these [general occupational guidelines](#) on COVID-19 and the CUPE BC website now has a [landing page](#) for information relevant to CUPE members from all sectors in B.C. Meanwhile, CUPE has called on the federal government to provide [more protections for coronavirus frontline workers](#). CUPE welcomes the government's announcement of the [Emergency Response Benefit](#), which will cover people who have lost their job, people who are sick or quarantined, and parents who must stay home without pay to care for children. CUPE also welcomes changes to B.C.'s Employment Standards Act dealing with [COVID-19 Leave](#), including an amendment that provides workers with unpaid, job-protected leave if they are unable to work for reasons related to COVID-19. The leave is retroactive to January 27, 2020. The application form will be available on April 6.

Member rights

Members should be aware of their workplace rights during these extraordinary circumstances; some of which we have negotiated in response to this public health emergency:

- Paid general leave on isolation/quarantine, without impacting on your leave banks, including sick leave;
- A safe workplace, including the provision of personal protective equipment, procedures and training (where necessary) to protect you while you are working to keep the public safe;
- Refusal of unsafe work in accordance with the Workers' Compensation Act, Occupational Health and Safety Regulations Sections 3.12 and 3.13 (view CUPE's [Refusing Unsafe Work – COVID-19](#) bulletin); and
- Cancellation of pre-approved leave, such as vacation leave, at our member's sole discretion.

Redeployment to another job or tasks in health care

We have been informed that there may be a need for redeployment within the health care system to meet the demands of the COVID-19 pandemic. Principles are being negotiated at the provincial level to determine how redeployment to different jobs, work areas, or tasks will occur. Our primary focus is to ensure that you, our members, feel safe and capable in the role to which you are redeployed. If you are asked to redeploy and have concerns, please contact your CUPE local and provide the name and contact information for the manager/director or HR Advisor discussing such plans.

During this current crisis, we can all appreciate feelings of uncertainty surrounding our employment. We want to assure you that, regardless of when the COVID-19 pandemic concludes or recedes, we will ensure that your collective agreement and employment rights are enforced.

If there is anything else we can do to support you, please contact your [CUPE local](#). For additional information and resources specific to COVID-19 in B.C. not found here, please visit: www.bccdc.ca.