

# Covid 19 Vulnerable Populations Cowichan Task Force Response Plan March 31 2020

*Goal; to enable individuals living on the street / experiencing homelessness to adhere to Island Health's public health advisory pertaining to "Social Distancing" and "Self-Isolating"/"Sheltering in Place"*

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The plan has 3 phases:

**Phase One:** April 1 – April 30, 2020

This is a 30-day Emergency Response to support *Self-isolating / Sheltering in Place*

**Phase Two:** April 1 – June 30, 2020

Essentially Phase 2 is Phase 1 X 3 months, when Phase 1 has been initiated the *Covid 19 Vulnerable Populations Cowichan Task Force* will develop a 90 day plan incorporating any modifications to the Phase 1 plan that may be required arising from insights gained while implementing Phase 1.

**Phase Three:** June 30, 2020 – June 30, 2025

The *Covid 19 Vulnerable Populations Cowichan Task Force* will develop a post Covid 19 transition plan that is consistent with the five year plan submitted to the Minister of Mental Health and Addictions on November 1 2019 by the Cowichan Leadership team. (Cowichan Valley Vision for Wellness, 2019 – see attached Appendix A.) Phase 3 planning will also incorporate consideration of transitioning to the proposed supported housing and shelter developments currently under discussion in Duncan and North Cowichan and other innovative rapid response housing opportunities that may arise.

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## **Phase One: 30-day Emergency Response**

**Purpose:** to identify accommodation for Cowichan's vulnerable populations appropriate to individual circumstances and to provide basic on-site and/or outreach services to meet other related needs like toileting, hand washing, food, site security etc.

### **Group A "Family Clusters"**

For individuals that find it very difficult to stay indoors or in a group setting – whether for mental health, addictions or other reasons (anticipated substance use on site). Accommodation would be at outdoor sites such as parking lots equipped with tents. In such accommodation a small group of individuals would form social clusters or "family" clusters which would be

considered one “household” self isolating together. It is anticipated that some of these family clusters will be for women or men only; groupings at each proposed site will be determined in partnership with service providers, current outreach workers and affected individuals.

Anticipated numbers in the Group A category;  
**85 individuals in CORE Area (Duncan/NC/CT)**  
**7 Individuals Ladysmith**  
**12 individuals in Chemainus**

### **Proposed Locations for Group A “Family Clusters”**

For Duncan / North Cowichan area six (6) locations with 12-14 people at each site drawn from the following options: **These sites will need to be confirmed with land owners**

#### **City of Duncan**

St Julien Street Lot – *Ramada “shower rooms” blocked off for shower use and Warming Station*  
Duncan United Church Lot – *Cowichan Arena change rooms or Macadam park change rooms; Shower Use and Warming Station.*

St Johns Church Parking lot area or Empty CVRD Lot – *Cowichan Arena change rooms or Macadam Park change rooms; Shower Use and Warming Station*

#### **North Cowichan**

Cowichan Aquatic Centre parking lot  
Trinity Lutheran Church Parking lot on James St– ask Kieth 250-748-1159  
Chesterfield Sportsplex Parking lot – may be too far out back up only  
*Shower Use and Warming Station in Cowichan Arena or Macadam Park changing rooms*

#### **CVRD**

Cowichan Community Overflow Parking Lot across from VIU  
*Cowichan Arena change rooms or Macadam park change rooms; Shower Use and Warming Station*

#### **Cowichan Tribes Land**

Beside Old VIU  
Siem Lelum Gym Area- Closer to the  
*Shower Use and warming centre in Ramada Rooms ( 2-3 blocked off for shower access only)*

#### **Chemainus**

One outdoor site for up to twelve (12) individuals for Chemainus; Fuller Lake park  
Fuller Lake Rec Centre – has showers  
Would need porta-potty etc at site.

### **Ladysmith**

One outdoor site for (7) seven individuals would be in Ladysmith, the potential location identified is an empty lot on Buller and First st. across from the current emergency shelter. Food to be provided by LRCA, showers and laundry to be accessed by going to the LRCA winter shelter.

### **Lake Cowichan**

No anticipated need for Group A outdoor sites in the Lake Cowichan area

Other sites for possible warming centres and showers: House of Friendship  
Women's Night Shelter (WNS – CWAV) has showers and one set of laundry machines  
Cowichan Arena change rooms or Macadam park change rooms, Sherman Park if need be.  
Ladysmith shelter facility.

### **Basic Services required at each Group A Family Cluster site**

#### **Protection from elements**

Tents, Tarps, Shelters, Bedding, Lighting, Cots,

#### **Basic hygiene, bathroom and laundry services**

- Portable hand washing stations at each site, maintained daily
- Porta Potties at each site emptied once weekly by provider with 3<sup>rd</sup> party contracted daily cleaning
- Clean Team services to accommodate sharps pick-up daily plus sharps containers on site
- Daily garbage removal (Garbage cans/bins provided at each site)
- Laundry services for family clusters at each site, (laundry access off site)
- Showers: A combination of possibilities being looked at including – securing 2 rooms at 2 different hotel / motel locations to enable access to 4 showers with cleaning in between each use.
- Showers; each family cluster will access shower facilities in existing civic facilities such as Cowichan Hockey rink facilities, Friendship Centre, Fuller Lake arena. This will be based on a rotating access model so that each Group A cluster has access to a shower every couple of days, and each access will allow for individuals to remain indoors for a period of time after showering so people are not sent out into potentially cold wet weather immediately after showering. Securing the use of a range of facilities in proximity to proposed sites will be key to this component, as will supervision of this function.

**Food**

Group A sites will require food supports to support sheltering in place; 2x daily food drop-off services; a combination of current meal programs through the Cowichan Food Task Force and contracting with the Ramada kitchen function or other services to prepare meals and have outreach teams / contractor deliver to each site.

**Outreach General**

Visits twice daily to each site from outreach teams (Outreach team expansion will be required)

**Security**

Security will be based on a rolling model of frequent patrols checking in at each site throughout Phase 1 and subsequent phases as required. Municipal Bylaws staff can support this function to a very limited degree, including the incorporation of the current *Highway Corridor Safety Teams*. The Covid 19 Response Plan anticipates contracting with private security firms to enhance this component of the plan but due to potential capacity issues it is expected that we will be seeking security support from a range of sources. Frequency and routes etc. of security patrols to be determined at implementation of Phase 1.

Temporary Fencing at each site to keep people safe and to enhance site security.

**Island Health Needs**

**Health Related Services Required:** OAT/medication/safe supply, drop-off, visiting health care services, daily temp checks? (PHARMACY support for delivery of MEDS) harm reduction supplies.

## **Phase One: 30-day Emergency Response cont.**

**Group B “Basic Housing”**

Individuals able to care for themselves and others, individuals with chronic health conditions who should be sheltered or isolated, displaced families or individuals from insecure tenancies. Accommodation for this group would be indoors, individualized accommodations such as hotel motel rooms. Anticipated numbers in this category **including additional Hotel / Motel rooms blocked off for other basic housing and/or self isolation needs;**

**25-30 Core Area homeless individuals (Duncan/NC/CT)**

**10 women (from CWAV)**

**10 from “Bunkhouse program” at CMHA**

**6 Ladysmith**

**10 – 20 Cowichan Tribes referrals**

**Hotel / Motel Accommodation available in Core Area:**

Ramada confirmed 34 rooms  
Cowichan Valley Inn 10 rooms – 20 rooms  
Super 8 Wyndham – up to 30 rooms

Hotel / Motel accommodation in Ladysmith and Chemainus being explored.

**Basic Services Required;**

Laundry services – on site at each facility

**Basic hygiene**

Room cleaning and congregate space cleaning – contract with laid off hotel staff?

**Food**

2 x daily food drop-off services will be put out to food task force to deliver meals or prepare or contract with commercial entity and have outreach teams or contractor deliver. Some units have cooking functions and guests from Group B in those rooms can self-manage this component.

**Outreach General**

Visits twice daily from outreach teams (Outreach team expansion will be required)

**Security**

One security person attached to each hotel / motel site

**Island Health Needs**

**Health Related Services Required:** OAT/medication/safe supply, drop-off, visiting health care services, daily temp checks? (PHARMACY support for delivery of MEDS) harm reduction supplies

**Phase One: 30-day Emergency Response cont.**

**Group C “Need Support” (Hard to house)**

Individuals at risk due to pre-existing health conditions or age, mental health and/or other chronic conditions such as substance use disorder who would not be successful in unstructured environments such as Group A or B options. 55 individuals will need to be accommodated

**Accommodation Required:**

CMHA Warmlands shelter will accommodate up to 30 individuals from this category

Cowichan Women Against Violence (CWAV) will need to find a temporary shelter site that allows for up to 15 women in a space large enough for appropriate distancing, with washrooms, showers and appropriate line of site supervision.

**Sites Identified - Women only**

A facility as agreed in collaboration with City of Duncan / North Cowichan staff as a temporary Women's Shelter for up to 15 women (to replace current shelter space which will be repurposed because it is too small and crowded to allow for safe distancing practices.)

*Shower Use and Warming Station; Cowichan Arena change rooms or Macadam park change rooms.*

**Basic Services required**

Laundry services, food provision 2X daily, supervision and support

**Island Health Needs**

**Health Services Required:** OAT/medication/safe supply drop-off, visiting health care services? (PHARMACY support for delivery of MEDS) harm reduction supplies

**Phase One: 30-day Emergency Response cont.****Group D "Symptomatic or Covid Positive"**

Individuals who require quarantine (symptoms require monitoring not hospitalization)

**Accommodation Required:**

A combination of the following

1. Symptomatic in Group A will self isolate in a separate tent on their family sites and/or be moved to a shelter space on case by case
2. Symptomatic in Group B will remain in hotel / motel accommodation.
3. Confirmed Positive – The current Woman's shelter can accommodate up to 15 beds and can be used for this purpose.
4. One or more large enclosed space with outside access, good ventilation that could be set-up and act as a "field" hospital – a community hall, hotel ballroom, or multipurpose rooms at the Cowichan Community Centre or something similar. This is in case of a sudden expansion in the numbers of people requiring isolation / quarantine

**Basic Services Required:** basic hygiene and laundry services, 2x daily food drop-off services, depending on location may require sharps pick-up clean team and daily outreach 'check-in

**Island Health Needs**

**Health Services Required:** harm reduction supplies, OAT/medication drop-off, on-site health care support and possible safe supply

**Group E.** Individuals who requiring hospitalization – self explanatory

Next steps;

Develop a preliminary budget for the plan, submit for approval

Convene implementation team

Negotiate for equipment, accommodation etc.

Identify and retain additional staff / contractors

Prepare sites

Coordinate food service and security

Work with service providers to place individuals into the appropriate site / accommodation option

Commence services and supports

Commence planning transition to post Covid response.

## **Appendix A.**

### **Task force Transition Prototype Draft Plan Phase 2 and 3 post COVID-19 surge**

The following briefing note submitted November 1, 2019 to the Honourable Judy Darcy, Minister of Mental Health & Addictions provides a framework from which to build a post COVID-19 surge and plan a pathway to hope for the most vulnerable in our community.

**ISSUE:** Request Funding for Proof of Concept in the Cowichan Communities - Pathway to Hope for Highest Need Substance Users and Youth at Risk for Addiction

#### **BACKGROUND:**

- The Cowichan Valley is in crisis due to the growing use of illegal opioids. While deaths due to overdose have reduced significantly due to the Overdose Prevention Site (OPS), overdoses have increased and the congregation of users in the downtown core is drastically affecting the business community and citizens due to theft and destruction of private property.
- Over the past two years, a Collective Impact approach has been used to involve over 300 participants across 60 organizations to design a community response to this crisis. However, the situation has now reached a point where community members are taking dangerous action to protect their property and families.
- Observational data collected through the OPS, open 6 hours a day 7 days a week, suggests the following profile for fiscal year 2018/19:
  - 26,683 client visits, representing 316 unique individuals; with 170 overdoses recorded
  - Over one third of total unique users are youth 15-24 years of age; 75% of this group are Indigenous and 20% of this group have complex needs with challenging behaviours posing serious harm to themselves and others (i.e. theft, destruction of property, and assaults)
  - The remaining two thirds is comprised of adults who use substances. Approximately 20% of adults using substances are responsible for most of the challenging behaviours
- Through Cowichan's peer-led 'Street School' over 180 individuals, of all ages, who use substances have met and identified their pathways to hope: having a voice in their health and wellbeing; access to stigma-free health care when needed; safe drug supply; local treatment coinciding with housing/ recovery housing; mental health support and treatment to deal with ongoing trauma, anxiety and depression and opportunities to be reintegrated into work and community
- On October 16, 2019 Minister Darcy met with stakeholders affected by the crisis and heard Cowichan's vision to trial a "whole community design for a whole community collective impact"

**REQUEST:** Invest \$2.8M in Cowichan each year over five years to trial and evaluate a multi-pronged approach that augments the existing system of health services, promotes cultural safety, and is trauma and LGBTQS informed. The strategy is to: simultaneously remove the market for a poisoned drug supply; create a supportive recovery environment; and disrupt the current pattern of crime and addiction that is impacting Cowichan's residential and business communities.