

Arbour Counselling Protocols:

detailed response to WorkSafeBC guidelines for *In-Person Counselling*:

WorkSafeBC protocols for in-person counselling are listed below in boldface numbered sequence. A description of how Arbour addresses each protocol follows each WorkSafeBC recommendation in lettered sequence (a, b, c).

Virtual Services

- 1. Where possible, provide virtual services for clients and offer in-person services only if necessary.**
 - a) We use practice management software (Jane.app) for online booking of appointments and for making payments online. Both remote and in-person appointments are available. Remote appointments utilize encrypted video-chat (Doxy.me). In-person appointments follow strict COVID protocols as outlined below.
- 2. Use alternate work practices to reduce the number of workplace visitors (clients, delivery persons, etc.).**
 - a) Addressed in 9-11.
- 3. Consider a plan or policy that speaks to COVID-19 related issues; this can be communicated to clients and help to standardize practices among counsellors.**
 - a) Website addresses COVID concerns and offers continued virtual services. In addition, our website identifies re-opening plans for IN-PERSON services with a set of COVID safety protocols and policies.
- 4. Communicate illness policy and safety protocols with clients through email or website before entry into the workplace. Consider recording a video or voice message to educate and inform clients about service delivery changes.**
 - a) Website will list illness policy and safety protocols; reminder emails will ask clients to only come to IN-PERSON appointments if all illness policy criteria are met; upon arrival, verbal checklist will be reviewed before entry.
- 5. Consider adjusting cancellation policy to allow for clients to cancel or reschedule in-person appointments without penalty if they develop symptoms.**
 - a) No cancellation fees are charged when clients are sick.
- 6. Refrain from home visits and transportation of clients to minimize physical contact.**
 - a) Not applicable to our services.
- 7. Consider whether an informed consent for in-person services during COVID-19 is appropriate (see the [APA Services website](#) for an example); this should be communicated to clients prior to in-person services.**

- a) All clients will be required to complete a “return to IN-PERSON counselling” consent form. This consent is automatically requested through our online booking software for a client’s first “IN-PERSON” session after May 25, 2020. Therapist will ensure that the consent has been signed.

8. Consider maintaining virtual services, if in-person informed consent is not agreed upon by client.

- a) Virtual services remain available for all clients as communicated through website and online booking software.

Before the appointment

9. Establish policies and procedures around when clients can access the workplace. Ask clients when booking whether they have symptoms of COVID-19. Ask them to cancel or reschedule their appointment if they develop symptoms or have a family member who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19. Remind clients of this policy when they arrive for their appointment.

- a) Our COVID safety plan and protocols for in-person counselling are published on our website at <https://www.arbourcounselling.ca/covid-safety-plan>. Online booking allows clients to choose between an IN-PERSON session or a remote VIDEO-PHONE session. IN-PERSON appointments established through online booking will indicate the time that a client can access the workplace. The front door to our office will be locked from the outside at all times. Clients who arrive for appointments will remain in their car or outside the front door of our office in the covered vestibule until their appointment time, at which time the counsellor will open the door for the client to enter.
- b) In each client’s appointment email reminder, they will be reminded to cancel, reschedule or use the video option for their session if they develop symptoms or have a family member who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The email remainder will provide a link to the pre-session symptom checklist posted at <https://www.arbourcounselling.ca/pre-session-checklist>
- c) At the appointment time, the therapist will review this same checklist of questions before proceeding with the appointment. If the checklist requirements are not met at appointment time, the client will be given the option to proceed with the appointment via phone or video chat or to cancel the appointment with no late fees.

10. Ensure that all in-person appointments are scheduled and staggered to allow time to sanitize surfaces between appointments (e.g., schedule a break or virtual session following an in-person appointment) and to minimize contact with others.

- a) If we have days where more than one therapist is in the office, shifts are staggered to start on the hour and 1/2 hour, and if necessary, at 15 after the hour and 45 after the hour, if more than two therapists.
- b) Wipe down of sitting surfaces and door handles after each appointment.

11. Identify any risks that arise from the reduction of people at the worksite; for example, counsellors working alone and/or with high-risk populations. Address these risks as required.

- a) No change from pre-COVID and further addressed by front door remaining locked.

12. Post COVID-19 protocols using signage for both workers and clients throughout the workplace. Consider posting signage in other majority languages or provide pictograms. This may be posted at entrance and/or exit locations, if practicable. WorkSafeBC has [signage available](#) for this purpose.

- a) We will post relevant protocols using signage for both therapists and clients on front door and inside wait room.

13. Consider asking clients to wait in their vehicles, or outside the office if possible, until just before their appointment or when they are called or texted to come in.

- a) Addressed in 1A.

14. Plan the work and anticipate areas where physical distancing cannot be maintained (e.g., corridors, small offices, etc.). Consider single-person access if entry into constricted area is required.

- a) As of Nov 19, 2020, we require that all therapists and clients wear masks when moving through the office to and from a counselling room. Upon being seated at a safe distance and the therapist behind a safety screen in smaller offices, the masks can be removed.
- b) Clients will enter the main entrance after the therapist walks outside and holds open the door at a safe distance. They will sanitize their hands with provided sanitizer, go into the room first and then the therapist will follow at a distance and close the door. The client should touch no surface except the chair. For additional detail on movement protocols, see point 34b.
- c) For upstairs offices, therapist will prop open all doors leading to outside door. Open outside door and hold open for client. After client walks through, therapist closes all doors behind him/her. For additional detail on movement protocols, see point 34b.

15. Determine occupancy limits for each workplace area to maintain the physical distancing requirement and ensure total number of people do not exceed this limit.

- a) Different numbers of people will be allowed in each of the rooms. Two clients and one therapist in the downstairs rooms and 2-6 clients in the upstairs rooms. Clients and therapist must maintain physical distance the entire time. Each therapy room will have maximum occupancy posted on door.
- b) Staff-only common areas will be posted as such with maximum occupancy limits: Bathroom (1), Kitchenette (1), Admin Area (1).
- c) Initially, Sylvia (admin assistant) will continue to work out of her remote office where she is able to address her Arbour admin tasks. During office hours, admin phone will be forwarded to Sylvia's cell phone. Calls out from cell phone to use #31#.
- d) Initially we will keep our bathroom closed to clients, and we will not offer any beverages. We will consider ways to safely offer these amenities after adjusting to our initial re-opening phase.

16. Consider creating cohorts of workers who work together and who do not interact with other cohorts. This will assist in reducing transmission throughout the workplace in the event that a staff member becomes ill.

- a) Not applicable to our services.

17. Waiting areas should be arranged to maintain the physical distancing requirement. Install barriers (e.g., plexiglass) between receptionists and visitors. Place markings on the floor directing visitors where to stand to communicate with front desk staff.

- a) Our waiting room will not be utilized. No front desk staff will be present in our initial re-opening, and we will continue to use PayFirma for credit card payments as well as e-transfers, so no touching of CC/debit machine will be necessary. If we determine that front-desk staff is needed, we will install a barrier (e.g., plexiglass) between the front desk and visitors. As well, we will place markings on the floor directing visitors where to stand to communicate with admin assistant. If we move to payments with the physical CC/Debit machine, the machine will be wiped down after each use.
- b) Masks are to be worn at all times in common areas outside of the counselling room.

18. Provide clients with a direct and accessible route to sit in the waiting area and during the therapy session to ensure physical contact is not required to access the seating area(s).

- a) Addressed in 1A, 6A, 6B.

19. Remove non-essential items from the reception area and treatment areas, such as candy, magazines, booklets, pamphlets, and complimentary phone chargers.

- a) Waiting room is closed. Remove all pillows and throws from therapy room. Tissue box will be kept by the therapist. If client needs a tissue, therapist will hold box and hold out to client at arm's length. Clients will only touch the tissues they need. We will remove non-essential items from the reception area and treatment areas, such as magazines, booklets, pamphlets

20. Where elevator use is required to access the office, ensure clients maintain physical distancing and use of the elevator is staggered. [WorkSafeBC has occupancy limit signage](#) for employers to post.

- a) When elevator use is required to access the upstairs offices, we will ensure clients maintain physical distancing and use of the elevator staggered.

During the appointment

21. Restrict access to clients only where possible (i.e., no children, friends, or family accompaniment allowed). Include consideration for disabled individuals and those who require accompaniment (e.g., a parent or guardian).

- a) Only clients will be allowed in our office space during their appointment. Those who are accompanying clients will be asked to stay in their vehicles.

22. Provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer for clients to use upon entry to the workplace.

- a) We will provide hand sanitizer for clients to use before entry into the office. Sanitizer will be placed on main entry counter downstairs, and at entry to blue room upstairs with a sign for each client to utilize upon arrival and departure.

23. Use alternative forms of greetings and avoid hand shaking or close contact.

- a) No physical contact whatsoever will be made between client and therapist.

24. Consider implementing alternative forms of treatment that do not require physical contact.

- a) Physical contact is not applicable to our services.

25. For couples or family counselling, ensure that clients who attend are from the same household or "social pod." Where appropriate, consider outdoor sessions for couples or family counselling to ensure the physical distancing requirement.

- a) Ask couple or family if they are from the same social pod (include in the pre-session checklist). If more than 3 people, use upstairs, 2 or 1 can use downstairs.
- b) For the summer we are investigating an outdoor option at the church parish house garden, but this option remains a secondary priority, and to simplify re-opening, we will begin with our indoor spaces.

26. Try to limit the use of cash and limit the handling of credit cards whenever possible, by allowing clients to scan or tap their cards and handle the card readers themselves. Encourage tap payment over pin pad use.

- a) Initially, all payments will be made via PayFirma and e-transfer, and no option will be offered to use the CC/Debit Machine. If we move to payments with the physical CC/Debit machine, the machine will be wiped down after each use. Tap over pin entry will be suggested if payment is less than \$100.

27. Limit the use of communal pens and refrain from exchanging items before and after the appointment (e.g., send receipts, documents, and reports electronically).

- a) No pens are utilized. iPad and Apple Pencils will be utilized by the same 1 or 2 people and will be sanitized after each use. All transactions with clients are sent via electronic means and no paper receipts are issued.
- b) Play and art therapy modalities utilize communal art supplies and games/toys. We will reduce these supplies to a number that can be easily wiped down after each use.

28. If it is not possible to maintain physical distancing with clients, consider the use of masks. Masks can reduce the spread of droplets from the wearer, but may not prevent the wearer from inhaling the droplets of others. It is therefore important to ensure that clients as well as the counsellor are wearing masks to ensure protection for both parties. Refer to [WorkSafeBC's guidance on the selection and use of masks](#).

- a) We are incorporating a 4' x 4' plexiglass barrier on caster wheels that we will place between the client and the therapist for the downstairs rooms. The current seating arrangements downstairs are just on the edge of 6 feet distance, so a barrier will add extra protection. Given the Plexiglas protection, we will not utilize masks.
- b) Once we move to incorporate admin support staff and/or CC/Debit Machine payment, we will install a 2' x 4' plexiglass barrier on the admin counter.
- c) Masks are to be worn by therapists, receptionist, and clients at all times in common areas, moving to and from the counselling room. This additional protocol was added on Nov 19, 2020, upon stricter recommendations from the Health Minister.

Hygiene protocols

29. Implementing hand hygiene practices and avoiding face touching with unwashed hands can prevent infection transmission. This is particularly effective before and after breaks or meeting clients, even in the absence of physical contact. Refer to [WorkSafeBC's cleaning and hygiene protocols](#).

- a) Clients will be asked to use provided hand sanitizer pump upon entry to the office. Therapists will wash hands in sink after each "in-person" session and dry with paper towel.
- b) Therapists will avoid touching their face.

30. If masks will be used at the workplace, post [signage about the correct use of masks](#).

- a) Masks will not be utilized during sessions since we are providing Plexiglas barriers in all spaces where we cannot sustain 6 feet of physical distancing.
- b) Movement protocols ensure 6 feet of physical distancing for pre-session, to-session, and post-session routines.

31. Ensure good respiratory etiquette by covering the mouth and nose with the crease of the elbow or with a disposable tissue when coughing or sneezing. Encourage clients to do the same.

- a) If coughing/sneezing, therapists will cover mouth with elbow crease or use disposable tissue

32. Where practicable, use of touchless hand sanitizer dispensers, garbage bins, etc. can be helpful to minimize the transmission of infection through physical contact.

- a) Hand sanitizer dispenser is not touchless, garbage cans are touchless.

33. Ensure used tissues, disinfectant wipes, and safety equipment are properly disposed of in a lined waste receptacle that is emptied at least daily. Waste receptacles should not require physical contact (e.g., removal of lid) to discard items.

- a) If a client uses a tissue during a session, client will be given an individual paper bag to dispose of any garbage. Upon exit of the session, client will place paper bag into the open, lined receptacle outside of the therapy room. These will be transferred into a larger, open, lined receptacle placed in bathroom far corner (safe distance from client traffic) and will be emptied each week.

Other considerations

34. Minimize sharing office space or work stations. Ensure counsellors use their own equipment (e.g., pens, staplers, computers). If required, clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces before leaving the space, such as the computer keyboard and mouse, desk surface, and telephone.

- a) Staff Common Area **Wipe-Down Protocols**

(when more than one therapist is present concurrently)

In each of the listed common areas, occupancy limit is 1

Bathroom

- After each use, wipe down toilet seat, toilet handle, sink handles, light switch, door handles.

Kitchenette and Storage Cabinets

- After each use, wipe down sink handles, cabinet handles, coffee machine
- If putting away clean dishes or cups, wash hands before touching clean dishes.

Admin Area

- After each use, wipe down keyboard, mouse, phone, printer, drawer handles, CC/Debit Machine (when re-opened), chair, counter surfaces.

- b) **Movement Protocols** are established that adhere to occupancy limits and distancing rules. Protocols pathways and routines for pre-session, to-session, and post-session:

Pre-Session

- Both therapist and client are required to wear a mask while moving to the counselling room.
- Therapist opens door wide and stands outside offering safe distance for client to enter.

- Before entering, therapist asks checklist questions to client. If protocols not met, therapist invites client to alternative remote session (phone from car, Doxy from car, or re-schedule)

To-Session

- Therapist instructs client to enter the office and proceed directly to therapy room after utilizing provided sanitation gel on counter.
- If going upstairs, therapist instructs client to proceed up the stairwell and to utilize sanitation gel on counter upon entering the large room
- Therapist follows behind client at safe distance
- If upstairs, (therapist closes doors behind after passing through)
- Mask may be removed for the session

Post-Session

- At the completion of the session, both the therapist and the client must wear a mask to exit.
- Therapist finishes appointment at 50 minutes to provide time for wipe-down protocols
- Therapist exits room before client and ask client to follow at safe distance
- Therapist opens front door and walks outside to hold door at safe distance for exiting client.
- If upstairs (since several doors are passed through, therapist props all doors open upon exit, keep doors open for exiting client and entry of next client).

35. Refrain from providing and consuming communal food. Consider providing bottled water instead of community water coolers or fountains.

- a) Communal food will not be consumed. Initially, we will refrain from offering tea, coffee, water to clients. We may develop protocols for offering coffee/tea/water to clients who bring their own cups.

36. In office spaces that allow pets, request that they do not come or are restricted to another area of the workplace.

- a) We will ask clients to refrain from bringing pets.

37. Counsellors should ensure that they are sanitizing all high touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, light switches) before and after a client attends an in-person appointment.

- a) Post-session **wipe-down protocols** after each 50-minute session: chairs, door handles, counter surfaces touched, CC/Debit machine (upon restart of in-person payments), bathroom (if used in emergency). If upstairs, stairwell banisters.
- b) Wash hands after wipe-down.

38. Establish [hygiene practices](#) that address the needs of the workplace and that includes the requirement to wash or sanitize hands after coming into contact with public items.

End-of-Day **Wipe-Down Protocols** of:

- a) **Equipment:** iPad, Pencil, land line telephone, photocopier buttons, CC/Debit machine, admin computer keyboard and mouse, coffee machine.

- b) **Handles/Switches:** door handles, cabinet and drawer handles, sink handles and soap dispensers, toilet handles, light switches, and security panel keypad.
- c) **Surfaces:** countertop surfaces, chairs surfaces, plexiglas barriers, upstairs stairwell banister
- d) Wash hands after wipe-down.

Deliveries

39. Request contactless delivery to maintain physical distancing requirement (e.g., delivery person leaves packages in a pre-arranged location) where possible.

- a) Any physical mail deliveries are made to the Victoria Nazarene office. Our office manager will bring and handle any mail into our physical office.