

MTWPAM

Clarification: Emergency Workers, Rotational Workers, and Self- Isolation Exemptions

COVID-19 Protocols

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Introduction

We have received a request to clarify the definitions surrounding self-isolation exemptions for our members. Below in quotations is part of the message MTWPAM was sent with a request to inform the membership. Our President had a call with Department of Health and Wellness (DHW) staff to understand the order and what it means for our therapists. The results of that call can be found below the quoted message sent from DHW.

"The Department of Health and Wellness has been notified by a member of the public, who is a truck driver and essential worker, that massage therapy is not being offered to him and his family by Nova Scotia Massage Therapists.

I am writing to confirm that the Order of the Chief Medical Officer of Health exempts workers who are essential to the movement of people and goods from the requirement to self-isolate or self-quarantine set out in section 3 of this public health order, copied here for your reference:

3 "Workers who are essential to the movement of people and goods, and who must enter Nova Scotia as part of their duty requirements, are exempt from the requirement to self-isolate or self-quarantine set out in section 2.1, particularly:

(a) healthy workers in the trade and transportation sector who are employed in the movement of goods and people across the Nova Scotia border by land, air, or water, including truck drivers, crew, maintenance and operational workers on any plane or train;

(b) Canadian Military and Defence Team personnel, Coast Guard, RCMP, Canadian Border Services Agency, and Canadian Security Intelligence Service; and

(c) first responders, including police, fire and EHS paramedic workers."

Therefore, these individuals and their families are able to go out from their homes in Nova Scotia, which includes the ability to attend their massage therapy appointments.

It is important to note that if they are unwell, they should not attend their massage therapy appointment, and they should immediately isolate at home and complete the online 811 assessment. In addition, they must practice physical distancing of two metres to the best of their ability, and also wear a non-medical mask at their massage therapist's office. This same information is outlined in section 4 of the Restated Order of the Chief Medical Officer of Health, copied here for your reference:

4. "Workers exempt under section 3 must practice physical distancing of two metres(six feet) to the best of their ability, follow all public health recommendations, closely self- monitor and must self-isolate or self-quarantine should they exhibit any COVID-19 symptoms as set out in the 811 online assessment.

The full Order of the Chief Medical Officer of Health can be found at:

<https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf>

Things Discussed on the Call with DHW

1) Is it mandatory to accept self-isolation exempt essential workers?

No, it is not. The decision to treat clients that are fully exempt from all isolation restrictions is still up to the individual therapist.

MTWPAM recommends consulting the reopening guidelines again and deciding if your space has sufficient controls in place. A large office with air purifiers or windows that open paired with a longer time between appointments to allow the air to circulate and any particles to settle will be less of a risk than a small, windowless room with no air exchange and a short turnover time between clients. This is your call to make, what the exemption order for essential workers does is allow these workers to live unimpeded because of their work. It does not mean that we must take the risk onto ourselves if we do not feel comfortable or equipped to do so. Exercise your clinical and ethical decision-making skills.

You always have the right to refuse unsafe work and must understand the policies to be able to advocate for yourself.

2) We recommend creating a policy notice for your clinic and/or website explaining your clinics decision to see or not see essential, fully exempt workers that you can reference should a conflict arise.

If you must turn away a client at the time of their appointment, make a note in their file that it goes against your clinics internal policy. Many clients would not feel comfortable having their appointment knowing that fully exempt workers may have been in the treatment room, this is an informed consent issue in our view; therefore stating your clinic policy on essential worker exemptions would cover that.

We understand that people all have their own personal view of risk at this time, but we are bound as manual therapists to provide informed consent. Many people are not aware of the nuances involved in the public health order and could feel violated should they contract COVID-19 at a massage therapy appointment if they were not informed. All of this is new, and the legal ramifications are unknown.

3) What is the difference between Rotational and Essential Workers in the order?

Domestic rotational workers are **not fully exempt** and cannot access massage therapy during their 14-day isolation per the public health order: <https://novascotia.ca/CoronaVirus/restrictions-and-guidance/#exemptions>

“Working outside the province (Domestic Rotational Workers):

Individuals who live in Nova Scotia and travel to work in another Canadian province or territory on a regular schedule (like Alberta oil workers) must self-isolate for the period of time they're in the province (up to 14 days). Domestic rotational workers need to follow the Health Protection Act Order and the [Directive Under the Authority of the Chief Medical Officer of Health – COVID-19 Exceptions for Domestic Rotational Workers \(PDF 483 KB\)](#).”

Domestic Rotational Workers can:

- Interact with people who live in their household, including children under a joint custody order or agreement who visit or live part-time in the household, without physical distancing, unless rotational workers become unwell (household members don't need to self-isolate unless they become unwell)
- Spend time outside on their own property
- Go for a drive
- Go for a walk, run, hike, bike or ATV ride off their property (if they encounter people from outside their household, they must wear a mask and maintain a distance of 2 metres)
- Visit a park, beach, or other outdoor public space (if they encounter people from outside their household, they must wear a mask and maintain a distance of 2 metres)
- Spend time at their cabin or vacation home (or a rental location) in Nova Scotia, following the same rules they would at home
- Drop off and pick up household members at school, work or recreational activities without getting out of their vehicle
- Use no-contact pickup options for groceries or other items purchased online without getting out of their vehicle
- Visit a drive-in theatre without getting out of their vehicle
- Go through a drive-through, like at a restaurant or bank
- Attend necessary (urgent and routine) medical appointments – this includes appointments with physicians and nurse practitioners, dentists, optometrists, and other **Regulated Health Professionals** where in-person treatment is required

MTWPAM NOTE: RMTs and Wholistic Practitioners are not Regulated Health Professionals and are not required to allow treatments under this policy, you may have to clarify this for some clients that feel massage is included in the list (item 12).

In the 14 days after they arrive in Nova Scotia, rotational workers cannot:

- Enter public places (like schools, grocery stores, shopping malls, banks, religious institutions, restaurants, and bars)
- Attend indoor or outdoor gatherings
- Visit people from outside their household
- Let people from outside their household visit them on their property or in their home
- Volunteer or work in any way that puts them in contact with people outside their household

Exemptions from Self-Isolation

Some people are exempt from the self-isolation requirement. Even if you are exempt, you still need to follow [social distancing guidelines](#). You need to monitor your symptoms closely, and self-isolate if you start to feel sick.

People who are exempt from the self-isolation requirement include:

- Atlantic Canadian residents who travel within Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland and Labrador ([Atlantic Travel Bubble](#))
- People from outside Atlantic Canada who have already self-isolated for 14 days in another Atlantic Canadian province before they enter Nova Scotia
- People visiting Nova Scotia to facilitate child sharing between parents under a joint custody order or agreement if both the children and the person bringing them don't have symptoms of COVID-19
- People visiting Nova Scotia for essential health services, plus 1 support person travelling with them
- Workers who are essential to the movement of people and goods, and who must enter Nova Scotia as part of their work requirements (not for personal reasons or other types of work)
- Healthy trade and transportation workers who are employed in the movement of goods or people across the Nova Scotia border, including truck drivers, crew, maintenance and operational workers on any plane, train or food production plants
- Canadian Armed Forces and Canadian Defence Team personnel, Coast Guard, Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), Canadian Border Services Agency and Canadian Security Intelligence Service
- First responders, including Police, Fire and Emergency Health Services (EHS) paramedic workers

Workers exempt from the self-isolation requirement should follow [social distancing guidelines](#) as much as they can and also follow public health directives. They need to monitor their symptoms closely, and self-isolate if they start to feel sick."

<https://novascotia.ca/CoronaVirus/docs/COVID-19-Directive-on-Exceptions-for-Specialized-Workers.pdf>

MTWPAM NOTE on fully exempt workers. The policy still says social distancing guidelines are in effect however if the therapist feels they can provide treatment safely and accepts there is still some risk involved in close contact for extended periods, following all regular precautions they may proceed with treatment and this is allowed. This is an individual choice, not a requirement of the order. You are not obligated to treat exempt workers.

Additional Resources

General information: covid19info@novascotia.ca

Occupational Health and Safety (safety questions): 1-800-952-2687 or laesafetybranch@novascotia.ca

Labour Standards (your rights and obligations at work): 1-888-315-0110 or labourstandards@novascotia.ca