



**Canadian Mental
Health Association**
Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge
Mental health for all



C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. COPING WITH COVID-19

August 28, 2020

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, staff of Canadian Mental Health Association Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge (C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R.) have been committed to providing exceptional mental health supports to clients throughout our region. They have faced, and continue to face, evolving circumstances and challenges but have not wavered in their dedication to this important service.

In response to the service adjustments they have faced, we asked our staff the following questions:



HOW IS WORK GOING? HOW ARE PEOPLE DOING? HOW ARE YOU DOING?



HAVE THERE BEEN ANY 'SILVER LININGS' TO THE PANDEMIC FOR OUR ORGANIZATION?



WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS YOU MOVE FORWARD?

Their responses have been compiled in this document to help illustrate how our organization has been and continues to cope with COVID-19.

For more information about how C.M.H.A. H.K.P.R. has adjusted service throughout this pandemic, please visit our website at cmhahkpr.ca.

HOW IS WORK GOING? HOW ARE PEOPLE DOING? HOW ARE YOU DOING?

STAFF RESPONSES

Work is going well with clear, safe protocols in place and sufficient PPE.

People who I work with (clients) have drawn on their skills in many ways, The use of natural supports, patience (in a time when there are not a lot of answers), resilience in coping with such extreme changes.

My life has seen an increase in work/life balance. Not commuting as much has saved time in my day, money for gas, less stress. The environmental impact must be acknowledged as well.



Work is fine, the organization seems to have thought of all the different angles regarding the spread of the virus, and is consistently working towards minimizing the spread.



Currently Catering PLUS is closed, which is probably the best thing to minimize the spread of the virus to our staff from the community.

Working at Safe beds, there is a process which involves always maintaining two steps of protection to minimize spread. Example: Masks and Social distancing, or Plexiglass and masks, or N95 masks for the times where we are not able to place two steps of protection between clients and workers. The N95 masks have been supplied.

The work is going well. We have been very steady in our education delivery and media engagement since the pandemic hit. We have been running all courses virtually.

We have not had any events since the lock down was issued, however we are planning on running our first event in a few weeks.

The team had one position turnover with one new hire. Both staff in this team report doing well and are planning to work from office a few days a week starting in September.



The reception team is the only team that has remained in office throughout the entire pandemic. Team morale is strong and they have been appreciative of all the health and safety measures the agency has taken.

Continued on next page.

HOW IS WORK GOING? HOW ARE PEOPLE DOING? HOW ARE YOU DOING?

STAFF RESPONSES CONTINUED



Work is going good, I have been supplied all PPE needed to do my job safely. I've been out in the community working for the C.M.H.A. cleaning at various locations since the start of this pandemic.

Work is going well for me. I have been able to find structure now compared to when we were first sent home.

My clients seem to be doing OK. In the beginning of the lock down, I had some clients with high needs. I'm finding that now, needs are climbing again.

Much of the work that we perform is manageable from a remote location, so day-to-day HR activities were able to continue. As a team, some of us thrived in the virtual world, while others missed the in-person experience.

The adjustment in the beginning was challenging and there were some struggles. Generally doing OK but staff feeling tired most of the time, exhaustion from navigating COVID-19 and working differently

Clients are grateful for the cell phones we provided as it has helped them stay in contact with us (their workers) and their families.

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY 'SILVER LININGS' TO THE PANDEMIC FOR OUR ORGANIZATION?

STAFF RESPONSES

I think "silver linings" to the agency are many. Environmental and cost savings from not having so many staff working in buildings (lights, equipment).

An ability to pivot services quickly shows that anything is possible and I hope that continues after COVID – perhaps there isn't a need for so much time and energy to be spent on every decision to make changes. Time saved by having Zoom meetings and not having everyone travel to one spot for meetings. Work from home on administrative tasks allows staff more flexibility in their day.



Continued on next page.

HAVE THERE BEEN ANY 'SILVER LININGS' TO THE PANDEMIC FOR OUR ORGANIZATION?

STAFF RESPONSES CONTINUED

A silver lining for human resources is the adoption of virtual interviews. This had been a last resort previously and generally a headache with Skype. Now the managers panel can interview from their site and not have to be in the interview room as was the challenge before COVID.

The organization has been amazing with keeping people employed, and working safely during the pandemic. Either from home, or protected on site work. It has kept a sense of normalcy in abnormal times.



Moving to virtual delivery has allowed us to expand our audience. We have been able to run several Nationally broadcast sessions all across Canada. In April/May alone we had more audience members for our sessions than in the entire previous year.

As well, by teaching virtually we have greatly reduced the cost of delivering sessions. While we aren't grossing as much per session we have greatly grown our margins.

The silver lining for the organization is knowing that the cleaning team has worked from day one of the pandemic assuring a clean safe work environment for the offices as well as being there for the clients.

I think that the pandemic forcing offices to close, and have people work remotely has shown that wherever we are, we are doing our job. For me, it has created a greater work/life balance and allows me to be more productive and take breaks in a way that suits my needs. Specifically to ground in nature. In the office, there is no opportunity to take space to recharge and ground for 5 minutes after an intense meeting or phone call.



We have found that some items are a little quicker, because we don't have to wait for everyone to be in one place at the same time. For example, job interviews; in the past we would have had to wait for a time when everyone could be in one place, a boardroom was available, and the candidate was able to come in. Now with Zoom, people don't have to book a whole day for a one-hour meeting. Job applicants don't have to travel, if they live outside the community, nor do they have to take an entire day off. There is also an increased level of comfort, as an applicant can be in their home, instead of in a room with a bunch of strangers.

Silver linings include saving on gas money, nicer mornings as don't always need to do the commute to work, flexibility of work hours, slowed things down in life, spending more time outside.

WHAT ARE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES YOU FACE AS YOU MOVE FORWARD?

STAFF RESPONSES

Challenges moving forward would be not returning to pre-COVID ways of doing things just because that's the way it was always done. Continuing with the momentum of the positive changes that have occurred.

Challenges for me personally will be trying to juggle the absence of daycare/ school and work this upcoming year.

As far as challenges in the organization, I don't foresee much because everyone seems well orientated to our new reality of living in a pandemic.

Being unable to run certificate courses (because they are only able to be taught in person). We are hopeful we can start to run certificate courses again with appropriate social distancing measures in the near future.

Continuing to ensure the health and safety of reception while slowly adding more staff to the building

Challenges for me moving forward would be a surge in cases of COVID. Having to work out in the community doing my job puts me at a much higher risk of contracting the virus and possibly spreading it to my husband and elderly mom. Where as if I could work from home my chances of contracting the virus would be very low.

For me, the biggest challenge is the unknown. I fear what is going to happen in the winter if another lock down happens. Work-wise, I am able to facilitate groups in a park while the weather is nice. I will need to find a space to use for groups in the winter as my clients do not want to use Zoom.

Human connection is an important part of an HR role, and building trust and rapport with employees, managers, etc is different when it is done remotely. Often the element of non-verbal communication gets lost when communicating remotely.

We often find ourselves saying, "when this returns to normal", but are now starting to think it may never "return to normal" so we have had to start to look at making some of our band-aids a more permanent change.

There is still a question of privacy and confidentiality when conducting meetings over the internet. This may change over time as people get more used to working in a virtual environment.

Fear and challenges with having to work indoors as the weather changes, dealing with constant change for themselves and in supporting the clients.

