

Dear Members,

Across Canada, Provinces are increasing, changing and removing some restrictions as we continue to navigate the COVID-19 pandemic.

FIRST AND FOREMOST, CATT-OG ASKS THAT YOU CONSULT WITH YOUR LOCAL HEALTH AUTHORITY TO LEARN ABOUT THEIR SPECIFIC MANDATES, RESTRICTIONS AND GUIDELINES IN ORDER TO BE WELL INFORMED OF THE REQUIREMENTS IN YOUR AREA.

With these different developments, you may now be considering whether it is time for you to return to face-to-face instruction or how to best proceed with your instruction practices as we continue navigating the pandemic. As re-opening and instruction practices need to be considered on an individual basis, we can't instruct you on when it's safe for you to open again or how you proceed. We have, however, been asked to offer general advice based on governmental requirements and our insurer.

Should I be practicing in-person or online? Should I re-open my practice?

In the current climate, we recommend offering online lessons where ever possible. If you are considering working face-to-face please consider the following three questions as you develop your plan.

1. **What are the requirements of your Province?** Each Province and Territory has a COVID-19 plan for business operations. To find the plan, do a web search for your province + business plan. Also, be sure to look at your Provincial CDC (Centre for Disease Control) website and your Provincial WCB (Workers Compensation Board) website.
2. **What are the requirements provided by your municipality?** Information here is patchier. If there is nothing for your municipality, defer to your Provincial plan.
3. **What are your requirements based on your health, age and other risk factors?** Your health is more important than your student's sessions. Face-to-face instruction increases the risk to you and your immediate family. Regardless of your Provincial directives to returning to work. If you or someone in your household is at high risk of becoming seriously sick with COVID-19, the risk of illness may remain too high for you to return at the moment.

IF ANY OF THESE THREE LEVELS DOES NOT GIVE YOU A CLEAR GO-AHEAD FOR REOPENING OR CONTINUING WITH YOUR PRACTICE. DO NOT GO AHEAD WITH FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION.

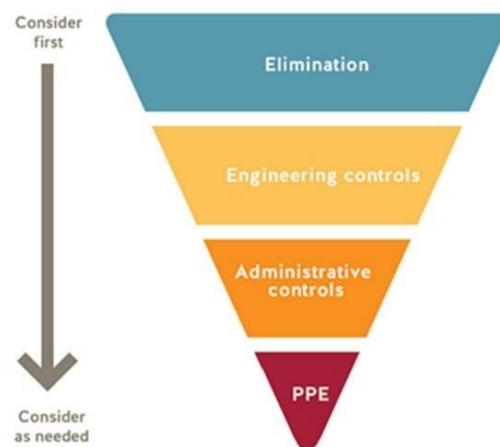
How do I reopen my practice? How do I make my workplace safe for everyone?

Your Provincial guidelines will require you to adhere to specific protocols. Here are some elements that, at a minimum, you should consider. These are not exhaustive, nor prescriptive. Cross-reference these with your Provincial requirements, and own common sense.

Wherever possible, use protocols that reduce the risk the most.

First Level – Elimination:

- **Complete a written risk assessment of your workplace to identify places where the risk of transmission is introduced.** Provide a written copy of this plan with your families and post it by the entrance of your practice. Include it on your website if you have one. Consider:
 - High-touch areas.
 - Times/places where people congregate.
 - Times where physical distancing is not possible.
- Consider how many families you will be in contact with each week.
- **Screen yourself and your student for signs of illness before each session.**
 - Here is a government [self-check assessment](#).
 - Keep evidence of these checks.
- **You must develop and communicate policies prohibiting the following people from entering the workplace:**
 - Anyone who has had symptoms of COVID-19
 - Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada within the last 14 days
 - Anyone who has been identified by Public Health as a close contact of someone with COVID-19
 - Anyone who has been told to isolate by Public Health
- Prohibit or limit visitors.
- Have a plan around workers who may start to feel ill while at work, including who they should notify and how they will travel from the workplace to their home.
- Will you have workers working alone to reduce the risk of transmission? If so, you need to have procedures for these workers to ensure they are safe.



SOURCE: WORKSAFE BC'S GUIDELINES FOR IN-PERSON COUNSELLING

- If you will have employees working from home, you need to develop work from home procedures to ensure workers are working safely.
- Limit the number of people in your home/studio at any one time.
- Ensure that all in-person appointments are scheduled and staggered to allow time to sanitize surfaces between and to minimize contact with others.
- Ask parents 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.
- Waiting areas should be arranged to maintain the physical distancing requirement. Install barriers (e.g., plexiglass) between practitioners and students. Place markings on the floor directing visitors where to stand to communicate you or other staff members.
- Remove non-essential items from the reception and tutoring areas, such as books, candy, magazines, booklets, pamphlets, and complimentary phone chargers. Ensure students have personal tactiles that are not shared.
- Provide handwashing facilities or hand sanitizer for students to use upon entry to the home or studio.
- Restrict access to students and one parent only where possible (i.e., no children, friends, or family accompaniment allowed).
- Use alternative forms of greetings and avoid hand shaking or close contact.
- **Use of face masks is mandatory.** 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 both practitioner and student are wearing masks to ensure protection for both parties. [Refer to WorkSafeBC's guidance on the selection and use of masks.](#)
- Where possible, maintain 2 meters of physical distancing.
- Ensure that both you and your student give hands a thorough wash for at least 20 seconds at the **beginning and end** of each session. [Here is a video to share with kids.](#)

Second level – Engineering Controls:

- If you can't maintain physical distancing during your session, consider using a plexiglass barrier between you and your student.
- Create a session kit for each student that includes a tactile, pens, pencils, glue etc. Have the child pull it out from where it lives and return it the end of their session so that you do not touch it or the items in it at all.
- If you travel to student's homes, consider the trunk space in your car and ensure that cross-contamination can not occur there.
- Work creatively to engineer separation between the things that you touch and the things that your students touch.

Third Level – Administrative Controls:

- Establish cleaning / disinfection protocols between sessions. Schedule extra time between sessions to ensure that there is enough time for inter-session cleaning. Consider all areas that families may touch including washrooms or space where the parent may wait.

- Consider one-way routes through doors if there is a high through-traffic area.

Fourth Level – Protection (PPE)

- We acknowledge that wearing a mask is challenging while teaching, especially when working with children with low phonological awareness skills. However, this requirement is mandatory if you are teaching face-to-face. A face shield alone does not provide enough protection. PPE is your final level of protection. PPE needs to be used in combination with the other levels of protection and worn properly in order to be effective.

WorkSafe BC has specific recommendations for individuals conducting in-person appointments such as counselors, psychologists and Speech and Language Pathologists. These recommendations apply to you as well if you are currently providing in-person instruction or if you are considering doing so.

- Where possible, provide virtual services for clients and offer in-person services only if necessary.
- Use alternate work practices to reduce the number of visitors (students, family members, delivery persons, etc.).
- Consider a plan or policy that speaks to COVID-19 related issues; this can be communicated to clients.
- 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.
- Consider adjusting cancellation policy to allow for clients to cancel or reschedule in-person appointments without penalty if they develop symptoms.
- Refrain from home visits.
- 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.
- Consider maintaining virtual services, if in-person informed consent is not agreed upon by client.

AFTER CONSIDERING THESE FACTORS, IF YOU DO NOT FEEL THAT YOU CAN MITIGATE THE RISK TO YOU AND THE FAMILIES YOU WORK WITH. DO NOT RETURN TO FACE-TO-FACE PRACTICE OR CONTINUE PRACTICING.

I heard that COVID-19 isn't so bad for kids.

There is evidence that children are less likely to contract COVID-19, and if they do they are more likely to develop mild symptoms. However, the World Health Organisation reminds us that [people of all ages](#) are susceptible to COVID-19 and that those with pre-existing health conditions are at the most risk. You may not be aware that your student falls into this category, or that they share a home with someone who is vulnerable. For this reason, we must take the same precautions with children as we do with the rest of the population.

How does our insurance support me if COVID-19 enters my workplace?

Your membership to CATT-OG provides your practice with Commercial General Liability (CGL) Insurance Coverage. This provides you with third party legal liability insurance protection against claims in which it is alleged you or your organisation is legally liable for bodily injury and/or property damage to a third party. Your CGL policy may provide protection in the event of a COVID-19 related liability claim, but it will depend on the specific allegations provided in the statement of claim.

The insurance industry as a whole is still figuring out how they will manage pandemic issues. However, our insurer did confirm that any statement of claim would have to prove some sort of negligence on your part. For this reason, **we can not state clearly enough that you must take the standard cautionary measures outlined by your local health authorities in response to COVID-19.**

Should I ask my families to sign a waiver of liability?

We suggest it. However, there are some things you need to know about waivers.

Pros:

- A waiver communicates to families that there is a risk to returning to face-to-face instruction. A parental signature on a waiver shows that the parent was informed of this risk and chose to accept the risk.
- The waiver should be sent to parents with a copy of your risk assessment attached. This communicates to the parents, that you have considered risks carefully and created a plan to reduce the chances of infection during your sessions. This will make it harder to build a case of negligence against you in the case of a lawsuit.

Cons:

- Waivers may or may not stand up in a court of law. They are simply an extra layer of protection.
- Asking a family to sign away their legal right to compensation protects you, but may act as a barrier in your relationship with that family.
- If a family refuses to sign a waiver, you will need to decide whether you will offer that family face-to-face sessions.
- Other things to consider when using a waiver:
- The family must have time to read and return the signed waiver before they attend your physical location.

- Encourage the family to ask questions before signing the form, and ensure that they have an understanding of the waiver.
- You must always follow the protocol you outline in your risk assessment.

ONCE AGAIN, WE REITERATE. IF YOU ARE NOT CONFIDENT ABOUT RETURNING TO FACE-TO-FACE INSTRUCTION, DO NOT RETURN TO IT. THE HEALTH OF YOU, YOUR FAMILY, AND THE FAMILIES YOU SERVE ARE OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE.

Navigating this pandemic which has now lasted almost a year, has been challenging to say the least. Members have embraced the technology required for online instruction or gone without income. As we continue to reassess and make decisions on how to continue practicing, we must do our best to be diligent with how we proceed. CATT-OG is with you as you work through these challenges. While we can't meet physically, we do have a [virtual Facebook group](#). We encourage you to connect with our community there. If you have any specific questions or suggestions on how we can support you better, please reach out to the board at chair@ogtutors.com

Yours in learning,

Board of Directors

Canadian Academy of Therapeutic Tutors - OG