



The Canadian Association for Marriage and Family Therapy
L'association Canadienne pour la thérapie conjugale et familiale

Dear fellow members,

These are challenging times, and the COVID19 pandemic has significant implications for all of us. While many of our clients – and some of us – are still reeling from the effects of physical distancing, we are now being asked to prepare for ‘re-opening’.

Many of us may be caught between the urge to go back to work - both for our clients’ sake and for our own financial security – and our concerns about transmission of the virus.

Some of us are safeguarding the well-being of someone else’s frail health, or our own; some of us are worried about ourselves being a vector which contributes to the spread of the disease.

This is most certainly a time when we are aware of being a part of many interlocking systems: how do we discern what is best, in the midst of competing interests? How do we invite our clients to be part of that reflection?

When to return to face-to-face sessions

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How to decrease the chances of transmission of COVID 19

Each province is making decisions based on its unique situation. **It is essential that you check with your province and your professional licensing body regarding their plans before you contemplate returning to seeing clients face to face.** The reopening plan will be different depending on your location, professional regulator, and work setting. (I have put together a list of the various provincial websites at the bottom of this message.)

Once your province and licensing body have deemed it safe to return to work, here are some key issues for you to consider.

- First and foremost, can you **safely maintain two metres** between you and clients in your current office space?
- Can you reconfigure your office to make this possible? (If the answer is **no** to both these questions, is there a temporary office space that you can use or is it preferable to continue using a secure video conferencing platform?)

Are you able and willing to:

- Regularly **disinfect** commonly touched surfaces and objects in your workspace such as doorknobs, mugs, pens and armrests?
- **Wash your hands** for twenty seconds or use alcohol wipes between sessions?
- Add additional boxes of **tissues and hand sanitizer** to your office to minimize the chances of unintentional transmission?
- Create **social distancing** in your waiting room/area by spacing chairs two metres apart? If you do not have enough space to do this, please temporarily close your waiting room and use **text/instant messaging** to notify clients when you are ready to see them. This will allow them to wait in a space that allows for greater social distancing or isolation, such as a car.
- Change your schedule so that you do not book clients back to back. This will leave more **time between sessions**, minimizing clients crossing paths.

It is ultimately up to you to decide if and when you can provide a safe setting to meet face-to-face with clients. While you may be getting pressure from clients to return to 'normal' as quickly as possible, and may feel some urgency to do that yourself, be sure you have thought through all the factors above, so that all your therapy can be conducted in a safe and secure environment, and with peace of mind for everyone.

Before you see any of your clients face to face please **contact them and ask:**

- Have they been out of the country recently?
- Have they experienced any symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing)?
- Have they knowingly been in contact with anyone with symptoms of COVID19, or working at a 'front line' job?
- Do they have anyone that they are in close physical contact with that is in one of the high-risk groups (over the age of 70 and/or medically compromised) for exposure to COVID19?

- Use this opportunity to reassure your clients and provide factual/current information from the sources listed below.

This is an important time to utilize **Safe and Effective Use of Self**. This means having honest and clear conversations with clients about how you are deciding to proceed, and why. It is appropriate to explain your concerns, for them and for yourself.

This conversation may be a transformative opportunity in your work with clients.

Clients will be familiar with these **reasons**:

- You cannot create a safe therapy space for both you and your clients (two metres between both of you)
- You or your client is symptomatic
- You or your client has tested positive for COVID19
- You or your client has been in contact with someone who has been exposed/tested positive

Clients may not have thought about these **reasons**:

- You or your client is self-isolating as a precautionary measure or as mandated by an employer or a government agency
- You and/or your client is living with someone that is in a high-risk group (over the age of 70 and/or medically compromised)
- You and/or your client is living with someone that is working in a frontline job with high risk of exposure
- You have clients that you know are risk takers, impulsive and/or less likely to follow the governmental health directives regarding COVID19 (It is appropriate to decline to see them face to face until they can offer assurances that they are complying with community standards)

This crisis is having a financial impact on all of us. Please ask your clients if their finances have been impacted by the pandemic. Can they afford therapy at this time? If they have experienced a large negative impact on their finances and you are financially healthy enough, please consider:

- Waiving any cancellation fees you might have during this time.
- Offer a reduced rate (for a pre-determined period of time)

We have a [private discussion forum](#) for our members to talk and share their challenges of practicing couple and family therapy during this difficult time.

PLEASE use information from these trusted sources during this difficult time:

- [Public Health Agency of Canada](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- [Getting your workplace ready for COVID-19](#)
- [Risk-informed decision-making guidelines for workplaces and businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic](#)
- [Non-medical masks and face coverings: About](#)

Important information by Province regarding COVID19

- [British Columbia](#)
- [Alberta](#)
- [Saskatchewan](#)
- [Manitoba](#)
- [Ontario](#)
- [Québec](#)
- [New Brunswick](#)
- [Nova Scotia](#)
- [Prince Edward Island](#)
- [Newfoundland/Labrador](#)
- [Yukon](#)
- [NWT](#)
- [Nunavut](#)



Take care,

Andrew Sofin, MA, RP, RMFT

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