

## MEMO

**DATE:** 9/1/2020

**TO:** All SHA staff and physicians

**FROM:** Jasmine Hasselback, MD and Satchan Takaya, MD – on behalf of the Pandemic Screening Working Group

**RE:** Screening and the removal of the Interprovincial Travel Flag

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The Pandemic Screening Working Group continues to modify screening tools in order to best capture individuals potentially at greater risk of Covid-19, never forgetting that the virus is present in our communities and is always a risk. Our task is to balance risk mitigation against the need to ensure efficient service resumption, adequate family presence, and availability of resources such as PPE and private rooms. The current screening tool set includes symptoms and a variety of epidemiological flags based on our best and current understanding of risk. While we have maps guiding us to areas of elevated COVID activity within Saskatchewan and a flag for international travel (aligning to the public health order), we removed the interprovincial (IP) travel flag some time ago. We regularly receive concerns about removal of the IP flag and wanted to clarify our rationale.

The current public health order does not formally limit IP travel. We also recognize that individual activities that take place while in other provinces (or here in Saskatchewan) are a more significant risk than the travel itself. You might be quite safe in your IP travel, masking and distancing and avoiding risky situations or you might not, but simply being in another province does not significantly increase risk. Of more use, would be an areas of elevated activity across the country and we have escalated a request for such information and are awaiting a response. In the meantime, we will be using the public health advisory approach to alert of outbreaks in other provinces that have the possibility of a significant impact here in Saskatchewan – for example, if there was an outbreak declared in Medicine Hat, we would include that information in an advisory as the travel to and from Medicine Hat is frequent for those living in the Southwest.

Finally, there are robust communication systems between provinces to ensure that those who may have been listed as a close contact to a case while traveling interprovincially will be notified and supported, equivalent to processes in place when an exposure occurs within Saskatchewan. Individuals who become close contacts through IP travel are notified efficiently and will flag positive based on the close-contact question in our current tool set.

If you have further questions or concerns about screening, feel free to reach out to us or to Katherine Stevenson, Director, Quality and Safety ([katherine.stevenson@saskhealthauthority.ca](mailto:katherine.stevenson@saskhealthauthority.ca)) and we will bring your concerns to the Pandemic Screening Working Group.

**Safety | Accountability | Respect | Collaboration | Compassion**  
With a commitment to a philosophy of Patient and Family Centred Care

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