March 17, 2020

Dear Members,

In these uncertain times, the ONTABA board of directors is deeply concerned for the health and wellbeing of our members and the people to whom we provide behavioural services. We encourage our members to exercise precaution through social distancing to flatten the curve to keep people safe. ONTABA board and committee meetings will be conducted online until further notice. We will be closely monitoring updates and direction from our provincial and federal health officials:

- [Ontario Ministry of Health](https://www.ontario.ca)
- [Public Health Agency of Canada](https://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca)
- [Government of Canada](https://www.canada.ca)

We are aware of the impact that the COVID-19 global health crisis is having on society as a whole, our members, and to those whom we provide services. People may not be able to continue to access behavioural services which may have detrimental effects and put additional strain on families. We are aware that this is occurring in a time when diminished service capacity is already creating challenges. We need to find innovative ways to continue to provide support to the people we serve and each other.

With post-secondary institutions closed, agencies do not have support from placement students and supervision may be impacted. Supervisees and Supervisors are urged to carefully review the update from the [BACB](https://www.bacb.com). Service providers are faced with making very difficult decisions to stay open to maintain service capacity or to close for public safety. Today the province announced legislation for access to employment insurance, but it is unclear what support will be available to small businesses. We know that small businesses contribute tremendously in terms of capacity for ABA in the province. We urge all levels of government to consider some form of financial relief for private operators and contractors who provide clinical services. See Government of Canada Resources for Canadian Business information for [Canadian Business](https://www.canada.ca)

We encourage service providers to be innovative in how they continue to support people while maintaining ethical responsibility. Research in our field, psychology, and medicine has supported the effectiveness of services delivered via telecommunication. Some members may be able to leverage technology and continue to provide care if clinically appropriate, while following public health recommendations.

Our colleagues from the Ontario Psychological Association have best practice guidelines for tele-psychology services: [Guidelines for Best Practices in the Provision of Telespsychology](https://www.opa.on.ca). And the Council for Autism Service Providers (CASP) also released [guidelines](https://www.casp.org). Members who use technology should ensure that they are aware of and following provincial and federal privacy legislation. Some platforms are compliant with privacy standards (e.g., [VSee](https://www.vsee.com)), while others are not.
People are understandably anxious. We know that many of our members provide support to people with vulnerabilities including neurodevelopmental disabilities and mental health concerns. We can provide leadership by providing accurate and accessible information such as the following:

- Infographics prepared by the Special Olympics
- Ontario Government: what you need to know to keep healthy [infographic](#)
- Tips: How to explain a global health crisis to a child with autism

We encourage all of our members to take good care of their own mental and physical health, keep connected, and provide support in whatever ways they can to the people we serve while keeping everyone safe. Now is the time for supporting and innovating together.