Regulatory Responses to COVID-19 – Part II

Ginny Hanrahan, CEO/Registrar, CORU Ireland

“Walk on air against your better judgement”

(Seamus Heaney)
Datelines for COVID 19 Crisis in Ireland 1 April 2020

- First diagnosed case: 1 March 2020
- Cases numbers: 3,447 (20% Health care workers)
- Deaths: 85 (1 Health care worker)

- Testing +++: 60% Community transmission, 19% travel abroad, 21% Contract with Confirmed cases
- Aim to “Flatten the curve” to take pressure off hospital structures/ICUs

Challenges

Election February 6 2020 – caretaker government in place
- Emergency legislation through 27 March – no more can be undertaken until new Government in place
12 March – all school and colleges closed - work from home

27 March – clampdown on movement until Easter Sunday 12 April

CORU’s Regulated Health and Social Care Professionals

Phase 1: Legislation
- Clinical Biochemists
- Orthoptists

Phase 2: Establishment
- Psychologists
- Social Care Workers
- Counselors & Psychotherapists
- Podiatrists

Phase 3: Transition
- Medical Scientists

Phase 4: Business as Usual
- Social Workers
- Dietitians
- Radiographers
- Speech & Language Therapists
- Radiation Therapists
- Dispensing Opticians
- Physiotherapists
- Optometrists
- Occupational Therapists
Critical role of the regulator

- Protection of the public
- Communication and Clarity
- Governance
- Delivering operational requirements
- Planning for the future and the fallout

Protection of the Public

- How flexible is your regulatory system?
- When is a give too much?
- Restoration of previous registrants?
- Lessen requirements for those applying for the first time?
- Is there a give on the number of hours a graduate must have completed in the practice training?

Communication and Clarity

- Clarity for:
  - Policy makers/legislators,
  - Registrants,
  - Employers and the health services
  - Educators
  - Governing bodies
  - and the public
**Governance**

- Proper and legally robust decision making
- Making urgent decision currently but being aware of important decisions that are being delayed
- Only have meetings that are required during this period
- Dealing with Complaints

**Delivery of Operational requirements**

- Reviewed our Business continuity plan
- Urgent work – regulatory and corporate
- Managing important work
- Communication plan - constant review
- ICT – essential tools
- Responsiveness
- Checking with other regulators

"when you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person that walked in, That’s what the storm is all about"

- Impact on how regulation will be done – lessons to be learnt?
- Impact on the new entrants to the profession – different but? Useful learning
- Changes in How we work?
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Regulatory Responses to COVID-19

Peggy Sellers Benson, RN, MSHA, MSN, NE-BC
Executive Officer, Alabama Board of Nursing

Licensure Closure Plan to Include Telework

- **Level I**: All State Agencies closed for 7-30 days - essential employees and telework by VPN.
- **Level II**: Agency Closed to the Public, essential employees. No hearings or in person interviews scheduled.
- **Level III**: Entire agency division or multiple divisions out for quarantine or illness. Utilize essential staff to maintain core functions.

ABN Closure Plan (attached)
MESSAGING: WHERE-WHAT-HOW-WHEN

Prominent location
- Website
- All licensees, employers, Subscription Service subscribers
- Post emergency rules and minutes

Social Media
- Facebook
- Twitter
- Targeted list servs to various audiences

TEMPORARY ABN STAFF REDUCTIONS

- Time limit of change
- Reason
- What delays expected
- How to obtain updates
- Services discontinued
- Expectations of others (i.e. Employers)
- Staff contact guidance

Agency Closure or Staff Reduction Messaging

- Don't forget your staff (Remind app); communicate frequently
- Plan for essential services
- Mitigate loss of work through VPN
- Update your licensees frequently
- Pass on complaints out of your jurisdiction (public health)
NURSING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM MESSAGING

Lead: Instill confidence and encourage reasoned response
1. When others are fearful and cannot determine what would be acceptable to the regulatory board give them direction.
2. Answer their greatest concerns first!

Lay out the message
- Preceptorship and Clinical Considerations:
  - Completion of Preceptorship
  - Acceptable Clinical Learning Experiences to Complete a Course
- Instructional Guidance and Options
  - Give options for consideration

CNO, Employer, HR Messaging
- Communicate updates
- Create tracking spreadsheets
- Create PPTs explaining changes and what they can do
- Answer calls and assist with creative solutions

Specific Licensee Group Messaging
- Advanced Practice (CRNP, CNM, CRNA, and CNS)
- CNOs
- Educators
- RNs and LPNs
- Subscription Service
- Program Deans and Directors
Stakeholder Discussions: Lead and Participate in Discussions

- State Hospital Association
- State Nursing Associations
- State Nursing Educators
- State Regulatory Agencies
- Governors Office
- Public Health Department
- National Nursing and Licensing Associations/Organizations

Staying on top

- Update stakeholders regularly, as the public health emergency continues
- Reduce fears
- Assist with solutions
- Be prepared, so you can answer workforce issues

Next Steps

Moving Forward – Lead with Policy Solutions

- Stay in front of the problems
- Offer solutions to provider shortages
- Work with policy-makers and fellow regulators
- Listen/learn from others
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Regulatory Responses to COVID-19

Lise Betteridge, MSW, RSW, Registrar and CEO
Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers

Overview

- The Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers (OCSWSSW) and its role
- COVID-19 in Ontario
- OCSWSSW response:
  - Crisis communications
  - Core regulatory operations
  - Governance
  - Practice support for members
  - Staffing and Human Resources
The OCSWSSW
- Regulates the practice of over 22,500 SWs and SSWs in Ontario
- Protects the public interest by:
  - Setting entry-to-practice requirements to ensure that only those with specialized educational qualifications are eligible for registration.
  - Setting, maintaining and ensuring that members follow the Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice.
  - Requiring members to engage in ongoing learning through the Continuing Competence Program (CCP).
  - Maintaining rigorous complaints and discipline processes.

COVID-19 in Ontario
- Second highest number of confirmed COVID-19 cases in Canada - the majority are in Toronto
- Provincial shutdown of all non-essential businesses and services effective March 24, 2020
- Ontario’s Acting Chief Medical Officer of Health - issued two directives to health care providers regarding the suspension of non-essential services
- OCSWSSW is strongly advising members to suspend non-essential social work and social service work services

Crisis Communications
- Rapid escalation of COVID-19 crisis as of March 16, 2020
- Week of March 9, 2020 - finalized crisis communications plan and established crisis response team
- Office closure March 13, 2020; gradual restoration of core regulatory operations
- Stakeholder communications, including:
  - eBulletins and other communications to members and other key stakeholders
  - Website updates, including COVID-19 webpage and FAQs
Maintaining Core Regulatory Functions/Operations
- Registration – challenges associated with being largely paper-based
- Membership – online renewals
- Professional Practice support and presentations
- Complaints and Discipline processes

Governance
- Executive and Council meetings – bylaw amendments to permit remote meetings/processes
- Statutory and non-statutory committees – focusing on the essentials
- Role of the President, Executive and committee Chairs

Practice Support for Members
- Responding to practice inquiries related to COVID-19 and other areas of practice
  - Themes: essential/non-essential services, electronic practice, scope of practice, role of the College
- Providing information through eBulletins, website/COVID-19 page/FAQs, emails and phone calls
- To come: revised Perspective newsletter
Staffing and Human Resources

- Commitment to maintaining payroll and alerting staff to support and benefits, including EAP
- Ongoing communication – from Registrar and CEO, Deputy Registrar, Managers, HR
- Tracking impact – COVID-19 code on timesheets
- Planning for the uncertain – return to the physical office

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