



Income Assistance Administrators Regional Quarter Meeting

June 16,17,23, 2020

DRAFT MEETING NOTES V1

SFNFCI Boardroom
Online Zoom Meeting

Chair: Jocelyn Kakakaway, SFNFCI/Shelley Thomas Prokop, Director of Programs

Co-Chair: Lacey Kaysaywaysemat, SFNFCI

Present:

- Cynthia Cook, Lac La Ronge
- Judy Constant, James Smith
- Audrey Kingfisher, Sturgeon Lake
- Patricia Daniels, Mistawasis
- Rose Bitternose, Muskowekwan
- Barbara Paddy, Thunderchild
- Jacqueline Agecoutay, Zagime
- Carma Jimmy, Thunderchild
- Glenda Littlewolfe, Onion Lake
- Sheila Knife, Ahtahkakoop
- Donna Mantee, Piapot
- Fran Oksasikewiyin, Sweetgrass
- Lori Buffalo-DelaRonde, Whitecap
- Claudine-Cote FN
- Jocelyn Sandfly- Big Island

CRA-Staff Presenters:

- Tammy Pauls, Canada Revenue Agency
- Catherine Lemire, Canada Revenue Agency

ISC Staff Present:

- Stacy Venne, ISC – Fort Qu'Appelle
- Jason Yew, ISC- Regina
- Alan Leader, ISC – Prince Albert

Opening prayer- ask participants if someone would like to lead, otherwise a minute of quietness

Thank you for joining us, we have IA group, SFNFCI, ISC and joining later CRA. Our last meeting was in March and shortly thereafter everything changed with COVID. At SFNFCI we worked from home on line and returned to the office on June 1. Our OHS created a SFNFCI employee handbook to support a safe return for all.

Lacey has separated the province into 6 sections to support smaller groups to meet and share info, hear info and ask questions. We are using the Zoom platform for the meetings in hopes to understand peoples' experiences and determine if it's a platform easy to use.

SFNFCI will take notes and share with all groups and post on the SFNFCI website. Meeting notes from each group were rolled up and are presented below.

SFNFCI Welcome

- Based on Saskatchewan Health Authority regulations to COVID-19 we are currently unable to host quarterly meetings in person, however once regulation restrictions are lifted we plan to host another in person meeting when safe to do so.

- In order to ensure communication and information sharing is still reaching optimal standards SFNFCI, with guidance from ISC, has decided to move the quarter meetings online using Zoom.
- Zoom is an online meeting room which participants can access the online meeting using their computer along with a web link provided by Lacey. If participants are unfamiliar with Zoom or are not comfortable using the webcam on their computer they have the option to call in using the number, meeting ID and password also provided by Lacey. This invitation is sent out 2 week prior to the meeting date. Lacey and Jocelyn have also made themselves available to help anyone become familiar using Zoom.
- The IA group has been re-categorized into 6 smaller groups to better manage the online Zoom meetings. Each group will have 2 hours to discuss ISC updates, Q&A with Jason, and Roundtable updates from IA Workers.
- Each group was broken down based on Budget Centers: North Group 1, North Group 2, Central Group 1, Central Group 2, South Group 1, and South Group 2.
- This was designed to be tested for the first online Zoom Meetings to see how everyone adjusts to transition as COVID-19 is still impacting the way we meet.

ISC updates with Jason Yew

- Social Policy Manual updates were released May 2020. This was sent to FSOs' and IA Admins.
- Special needs monies were sent to Bands for emergency support for IA clients during the pandemic. This was designed to help purchase cleaning supplies, food etc. during the state of emergency. It was up to the Admin how to disburse these extra funds to their clients.
- Been getting a lot of questions regarding CERB. Communication was sent to the FSO and IA Admins.

A copy of the CERB communique is attached to these meeting notes

Roundtable Updates

Lac La Ronge

- The office closed its doors to the public on March 20, 2020 due to COVID-19 with intentions on staying closed until the end of June 2020. Most of the staff had started working from home.
- Clients are dealt with by telephone or email and only come to the office to pick up their cheque.
- The Admin contacted many clients to inquire about setting up bank accounts for deposits instead of issuing cheques to limit the in person contact. This has went well and currently have 1/3 of IA clients now receiving their cheque by direct deposit on monthly basis.
- The band was given additional financial support from ISC for all IA clients. This had been distributed as Covid Purchase orders (emergency assistance money gave in form of purchase order for food and cleaning supplies). Clients didn't need to sign for these.
- \$150 was given to each adult in April 2020.
- IA held half of the amount allocated in case of a positive case of COVID was found in the community. Our intentions were to provide groceries for quarantine families.
- In mid may another purchase order (\$150) was given to IA Clients. The clients really seemed to appreciate the extra help.
- Currently we have 1000 plus clients.
- Many clients are happy they didn't have to go to office for their cheque

- We have all IA staff rotating schedules. We have 1 supervisor and 1 intake worker rotating on 3 day schedule in office. We have our finance officers rotate on weekly basis. There is always someone in the office, just not at full capacity.
- La Ronge never had road blocks or security to monitor people coming into La Ronge but outlining communities had monitoring stations on entryways into their communities, most of these stations have been taken down and people are free to travel.
- Families had complaints for wakes and funerals, this issue was taken to the emergency response committee for resolution. There was the outbreak in Clearwater where 18 people tested positive for COVID after people attended a wake.

James Smith

- James Smith has a message board that we use to post all communication, announcements with members.
- We only allow 5 IA Clients into the office at a time to collect their cheque
- We have board members help distribute cheques. They are required to wear masks and we have sanitizers available
- We have 1 worker who cannot be in the office during cheque days as she is considered immune compromised.
- Any issues clients may have are dealt with by Judy when she returns to office after cheque days. Our FSO is also available to call and all questions are received and returned well.
- IA clients are not allowed into office and must stand 5 feet outside door when picking up their cheque.
- Our front of office has safety glass in place to help social distancing, safety procedures are currently in place and are diligently followed by staff.
- When the lock down ended, people took extra precaution and ensured safety measures like sanitizing were still being followed.
- We currently have over 300 IA clients in James Smith
- Our department was given extra money from ISC during the pandemic to issue to clients for emergency special needs. We issued \$255 per client (IA client only) in March 2020 and again on Friday June 11.
- We didn't distribute any special needs money in May 2020 because of the extra moneys being received from GST, CCB, and day school payouts. The money was intended for low income families so families who were already receiving other money didn't need the emergency assistance, we put the emergency assistance money on hold until it was needed.

Sweetgrass

- Hand sanitizer stations, plastic protectors and safety protocols are in place. Most offices did close down
- Our offices are closed to the public, I have been working through the pandemic.
- To ensure social distancing we have moved most clients to direct deposit as much as we can, this is not working in some communities. For the most part we still have clients who are being issued cheques so IA Admins have been out in the community doing cheque deliveries.
- The reserve did hire security during the pandemic to enforce curfew.

Ahtahkakoop

- We have installed a safety glass in our office to help with safety and social distancing during cheque days
- In June we had 2 Admins issuing cheques from the office, this worked out good and everyone practiced safety, there was no overcrowding in the office. It worked good for us.
- The community provided food baskets once a month to families
- Our office doors are still closed to the public, some are working from home.
- We have communication with our clients over the phone, if there is a client request or need questions we use the telephone.
- We did have road blocks but they were taken down May 15, 2020.

Whitecap

- Currently our Health center is still closed to the public
- PPE and temperature checks are required before staff go into the office
- Staff were provided office equipment such as laptops, printers etc. to help working from home.
- 80-90% of our clients are now set up for direct deposit for their IA Cheques.
- During the lockdown we did have clients who still received paper cheques, we had Contactless cheque delivery to IA Clients.
- On March 30 IA clients an extra \$100 for cleaning supplies and on April 15 an extra \$100 for more cleaning supplies or groceries was given to IA Clients.
- The band did not issue any other extra support or financial assistance aside from the \$200 that was given on in March and April 2020.
- Our Nation did not have roadblocks but we did have security around the community.
- Our program is currently looking into getting ASAP software: Would like feedback from other Admins that use this program.
- Sent letters out to clients in regards to CERB, had clients declare CERB and to be discontinued from IA

Zagime Anishinabek

- Our offices have been closed to the public, some staff are working from home
- We have had no home visits with the clients
- Cheque delivery for clients was contactless, admin used gloves and masks when dropping cheques off
- We currently have 26 households that will be affected as a result of CERB.
- CERB has made things difficult in the IA program.

Canada Revenue Agency, Tammy Pauls and Catherine Lemire

Tammy and Catherine were invited to participate in the group meetings to help admins address any questions they had regarding CERB, GST/HST, CCB, filing deadlines and to provide information on navigating the www.canada.ca website in regards to setting up MyCRA Accounts.

The Canada.ca web page now has virtual assistant to help you navigate web page. Screen will also prompt questions on how to apply for benefits.

GST

- On April 9, 2020, the one-time supplementary GST/HST credit payment was issued. People already receiving the GST/HST credit should have gotten it automatically.

CCB

- In May 2020, the one-time supplementary CCB payment was issued. People already receiving the CCB credit should have gotten it automatically.

CERB

- CERB payments were extended for additional 8 weeks, people can apply online at Canada.ca, the webpages help inform applications on eligibility and assists applicants on who to apply through; whether it is CRA or Service Canada.
- The application for CERB was made easy because it was meant as Emergency Assistance. The questions asked throughout the process was to determine if you were eligible for CERB, if individuals were not eligible they should not apply.

Link for information regarding CERB

<https://www.canada.ca/en/services/benefits/ei/cerb-application.html>

- Students such as: post sec, post grad, high school grad can apply for CESB, please see contact info on webpage, link provided:

Link for information regarding CESB

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/benefits/emergency-student-benefit/cesb-contact.html>

- There have been no “official” letter sent to applicants on eligibility or print outs on “benefit amounts”
- Currently we are unsure of penalties or interest on payback amounts for individuals who did apply for CERB and were not eligible
- You can act as an Online Rep for you clients that do have My CRA accounts online, this would allow you to access “benefit amount information” for multiple IA Clients. There is a process
 - o Clients would need to consent on granting you access as a Representative
 - o Consent would have to be sent to CRA or Service Canada before being able to verify IA clients are receiving CERB
 - o There are different levels of authority IA Admins can be granted, most would only need a level 1 authority to see all benefits a client is receiving.

- This process usually takes a few weeks.

Link for information on how to become a Representative

<https://www.canada.ca/en/revenue-agency/services/tax/representative-authorization/overview.html>

- If you have questions for Tammy please contact:

Tammy Pauls

Regional Outreach Program Officer, Prairie Region

Client Services/ Recouvrement des revenus et services à la clientèle

Saskatchewan Tax Services Office/ Bureau des services fiscaux de la Saskatchewan

Canada Revenue Agency/Agence du revenu du Canada

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Closing Remarks

- As we continue to move forward with hosting meetings online we are hoping to connect in person when it is safe to do so.
- Thank you for all the discussions and for your participation.
- Lacey will send out the Draft meeting notes to Jason and Tammy before sending the final copy to the Group.

Closing Prayer