



For Immediate Release | January 18, 2022

## Interior Health adjusting services to strengthen patient safety

IH WIDE – Interior Health is announcing temporary service adjustments to strengthen patient care due to Omicron-related COVID-19 staffing challenges.

“As we manage the Omicron-driven COVID-19 staffing impacts on the health system, Interior Health is proactively identifying services to adjust and relocate in order to maintain safe patient care,” said Interior Health president and CEO, Susan Brown. “We will resume normal operations in impacted communities as soon as possible and in the meantime, we are temporarily reassigning and redeploying staff to sustain essential services throughout the region.”

The temporary service changes include:

- Closing inpatient services in Clearwater and Lillooet to stabilize emergency departments in those communities;
- Reducing overnight hours at the Ashcroft Community Health Centre and the Slocan Community Health Centre in New Denver to stabilize daytime services in those communities;
- Adjusting some services at the Barriere and District Health Centre;
- Temporarily rescheduling all non-urgent surgeries; temporarily reducing services across IH to some outpatient services; some primary care services, adult day programs and some non-urgent home health services.

Service changes will vary by community and primarily impact scheduled patients and clients who will be contacted directly. In each instance an evaluation of patient or client impacts is being reviewed as well as alternate options for care.

“Current COVID-19 pressures have led to a staffing crisis that requires temporary emergency measures to maintain access to essential services that are relied on regionally. We regret the impacts these service adjustments may cause and will be contacting patients, clients and residents directly to address care needs wherever possible,” added Brown.

Interior Health is reaching out to local leaders and partners to answer questions and work together through this challenging time. Regular communications and updates will be located here:

[www.interiorhealth.ca/temporary-service-changes](http://www.interiorhealth.ca/temporary-service-changes).

“People living across the Interior region overcame exceptional challenges last year. I would like to thank each and every person working in health care for their selfless determination as we get through this crisis together.”

**A backgrounder is attached.**

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**Backgrounder | January 18, 2022****Interior Health adjusting services to strengthen patient safety**

- 1) About the temporarily closed inpatient services to reassign staff and stabilize emergency departments in preparation for short-notice staff absences at: Dr. Helmcken Memorial Hospital and Health Centre in Clearwater and the Lillooet Hospital and Health Centre.
  - Clearwater: temporarily close six of six inpatient beds.
  - Lillooet: temporarily close six of six inpatient beds.
- 2) About the temporarily reduced emergency department (EDs) overnight hours at the Slocan Community Health Centre in New Denver and the Ashcroft Community Health Centre to stabilize daytime staffing in preparation for short-notice staff absences.
  - Slocan Community Health Centre in New Denver: ED hours will be reduced from 24 hours to 12 hours. Until further notice its temporary hours will be 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. Anyone requiring emergency services outside these hours should call 911 or visit the Arrow Lakes Hospital in Nakusp (48 km away).
  - Ashcroft Community Health Centre: ED hours will be temporarily reduced from Friday 6 p.m. – Monday 8 a.m., to Friday, 5 p.m. – 10 p.m. and Saturday/Sunday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Anyone requiring emergency services outside these hours should call 911 or visit the Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops (97 km away).
- 3) The Barriere and District Health Centre will reduce outpatient nursing services effective January 20, 2022, and laboratory services will be reduced to one day a week effective January 24, 2022. These temporary measures are in place to redeploy staff in support of essential health services. Physician services remain open and the COVID-19 testing and immunization clinics are also continuing. Anyone requiring emergency service should call 911 or visit the Dr. Helmcken Memorial Hospital and Health Centre in Clearwater (60 km away) or the Royal Inland Hospital in Kamloops (64 km away).
- 4) The temporary reduction across IH to some outpatient ambulatory clinics, some primary care services, adult day programs, and some non-urgent home health services will vary by community. Scheduled clients will be contacted directly.