Research Brief: DTES Drop-In Reopening

Context
This document was prepared by the UBC Learning Exchange for members of Urban Core. It provides background information and discussion points on things to consider while planning to re-open drop-in spaces during the COVID-19 pandemic. This document was last updated June 11, 2020. If you need clarification or further information, please reach out to Community Engagement Librarian Nick Ubels at nick.ubels@ubc.ca

Summary
- Key areas to address:
  - Clear internal and external communications
    - Keep signs simple and limited to make them effective
  - Potential staffing shortages due to exposure, illness, or refusing unsafe work
    - Ensure enough staff are comfortable returning before reopening
  - Modifying spaces and activities to protect patron and staff safety
    - This includes a patron safety orientation and screening process (refer to attached VCH screening procedure)
    - Consider patron confidentiality and dignity when screening or gathering sign-in information that may be used for contact tracing
  - Take things slow – be prepared to regularly assess and update your plan
- Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is offering site walkthroughs and safety training to non-profit organizations
- All employers must create a COVID Safety Plan. There is no one-size-fits all approach.
- A neighborhood-specific approach is needed for:
  - Old infrastructure without sufficient ventilation
  - High population of vulnerable residents and staff
- Two factors increase the risk of someone getting sick:
  - Contact intensity, whether close or distant, long or short
  - Number of people gathered
- You can reduce these risk factors with:
  - Physical distancing of 2 m or more
  - Physical barriers and extra ventilation
  - Clear safety policies for staff and patrons
  - Personal protective equipment

Planning Tools
The tools in figure 1 and 2 below may be helpful for assessing risks and developing a safety plan. Figure 1 can help you assess an activity’s risk. Activities with high contact intensity and number of people are the riskiest. Figure 2 can help prioritize which measures to take first when to reduce these risks.
Figure 1: Risk assessment matrix from BC COVID-19 Go-Forward Management Strategy, p. 8

Figure 2: Worksafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan Recommendations

Steps to Reduce Risk
Worksafe BC recommends these steps for arts and culture facilities, such as libraries:

- Set an occupancy limit based on safety plan guidelines
- Redesign interior spaces to maintain distance requirements:
  - Reduce number of computer stations
  - Limit access to certain areas
  - Remove furniture
- Manage flow of people with one-way walkways or marking off walking areas
- Provide barriers (such as plexiglass) at desks or other places with frequent, close contact
- If possible, establish a separate entry and exit
- Provide hand sanitizer at all entryways
- Post safety reminders
- Consider cohorts of workers who don’t interact with others to reduce transmission risk.

Other steps to consider
- Provide PPE supply packs staff can re-use for one week at a time
This is particularly important for staff involved in screening
- Encourage staff to change clothes upon arrival and before departure from work
- Provide clear policies for staff to stay home if sick
- Provide work from home options for vulnerable employees, staggered shifts, or virtual meetings
- Prepare for more frequent and new kinds of work refusals from staff who feel unsafe
- Adopt clear monitoring procedures to identify possible cases – including screening questions for visitors to your space (refer to attached VCH screening procedure)
  - There is a spectrum of patron screening options to consider from signs and posters to asking “how are you feeling today?” to more clinical approaches
- Increase how often you clean high-touch surfaces like pens and door handles, or busy spaces
- Move some services outdoors under tents for better ventilation
- Develop “What if?” scenarios as part of your safety plan

Resources
- VCH COVID-19 Screening for Drop-In Centers workflow (attached)
- COVID-19 Supply Hub to source medical and non-medical products
- VCH shareable/printable resources (including posters about distancing and hygiene)
- Worksafe BC COVID-19 Safety Plan template – a checklist for creating a workplace safety plan
- Contact the VCH COVID-19 Assessment Team at 604-290-3208 for suspected cases

Sources
Exchange Inner City. (2020, May 4). Developing safety protocols for re-opening DTES services [meeting notes].