

Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development
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Date : April 1, 2020
To : Part II Schools and School Districts
From : Mr. George Daley, Deputy Minister
Copies : Mr. Craig Caldwell, Assistant Deputy Minister, Educational Services
Mr. Robert Penney, Assistant Deputy Minister, Corporate Services
Superintendents
Subject : **Bulletin #8: Working safely from home (COVID-19)**

A number of you started working from home when the minister of Education and Early Childhood Development closed the schools on March 17. Working from home has its advantages and disadvantages. Some of the disadvantages are magnified during particularly trying times such as these. I want to share some important information to help those of you working from home and away from your normal work routines and environments.

Your workspace at home

It is important to set up your home workspace properly and to practice a number of healthy habits. WorkSafeNB provides many [useful tips](#) and here are a few ways to make your workplace ergonomically sound:

- make one spot in your home a designated workspace to create boundaries between your work and home life;
- make sure you have room for your knees, thighs and feet underneath your work surface;
- make sure your chair supports your back;
- when you sit, your thighs should be parallel to the ground, when sitting, your feet should be flat on the floor (make a footrest from a pile of books or a small stool if needed);
- put your monitor directly in front of you and make sure the top of the computer screen is at your eye level to avoid straining your neck (use a riser or a stack of books if needed);
- place your keyboard in a way that keeps your arms at or below a 90-degree angle with your elbows by your side and your wrists flat;

Physical and mental wellbeing

If possible, establish a work-day routine, remember to take your regular breaks and lunch, stay hydrated. Make time to [stretch](#) and exercise. Going for a walk (while practicing social distancing) or exercising in the home or trying an online workout are all good ways to keep active.

Continue to socialize and stay connected with colleagues and friends; take a virtual coffee break with co-workers, call to check in with your work family and friends.

Remember to take full advantage of resources available to you for coping with [anxiety and stress](#) you may feel at this time. Check in regularly to access information and support through your [EFAP resources](#) online (or toll-free at 1-866-721-1738) as we all work through this unprecedented time together.

If you work in a non-critical function, and are at home waiting to be deployed, keep rested and healthy and continue to keep up to date through the regular bulletins and check-ins with your colleagues.

Leading a remote team

I urge team leaders to keep in touch regularly with their employees. A daily check-in with your teams by conference or Skype call will help keep you all connected. You are a key link to supporting your team members' health and safety and helping staff maintain a [connection](#) to their workplace.

Unfortunately, we must also acknowledge that home is not a safe place for everyone. For anyone in abusive relationship, being unable to leave the house to go to work can increase their vulnerability. The social effects of the pandemic are also creating conditions which exacerbate intimate partner violence such as unemployment and financial hardship.

While it is harder to observe signs of domestic and intimate partner violence when a colleague is working remotely, here is useful [guide](#). ***For anyone needing help, here is a [directory](#) of services for victims of violence.***

Keep safe and well and continue to stay informed by checking GNB's coronavirus [website](#) regularly for up to date information.

You can find all these bulletins and other information [here](#). If you are outside GNB's intranet network, you can find them [here](#).



George Daley
Deputy Minister