



COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PLAN

EFFECTIVE: NOV 1, 2022

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Introduction

The direction in this document comes from guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control, Indigenous rights holders and education partners – including teachers, parents and school leaders – to outline requirements and recommended measures for K-12 school communicable disease prevention plans. These comprehensive guidelines build on the [Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) developed by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC).

Guiding principles of the K-12 sector response, as well as additional guidance regarding students from First Nations communities, and students and parents/caregivers with immune compromise or medical complexity is available in the K-12 Education Recovery Plan.

SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

We provide a supportive environment for communicable disease prevention by:

- Having staff model personal prevention measures (e.g., hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette), and assist younger students as needed.
- Sharing reliable information, including from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer to parents, families and caregivers.
- Promoting personal practices in the school (e.g., posters).
- Ensuring individual choices for personal practices (e.g., wearing a mask or face covering) are supported and treated with respect, recognizing varying personal comfort levels.
- We use an inclusive and trauma-informed lens when developing our communicable disease prevention plan.
- We use positive and inclusive approaches to support personal practices aligned with existing professional practices to address behaviour.
 - Approaches should not exclude students from participating in school or potentially result in stigma.
- We proactively communicate the scope and timeline for changes to our communicable disease prevention plan when measures are removed or added.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION PLANS

Communicable disease prevention plans focus on reducing the risk of transmission of communicable diseases (including COVID-19). These include ongoing prevention measures and may include temporary additional measures.

We will review our communicable disease prevention plan when guidance is updated, and/or on an annual basis or as circumstances require.

Additional information, resources and employer requirements are available from [WorkSafeBC](#).

COMMUNICATION AND TRAINING/ORIENTATION

We will communicate relevant guidance, recommendations, and orders from public health to our school community.

As required by WorkSafe BC, we will:

- Provide newly hired staff and staff who change worksites with an orientation and any required training on the communicable disease prevention measures for the worksite.
- Inform staff and provide any associated training when there are changes to the communicable disease prevention measures.

We will provide orientation opportunities to students and others in the school (e.g., parents/caregivers, teacher candidates, volunteers) to ensure all school community members are aware of their responsibilities.

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION DRILLS

We continue to practice various procedures, including school fire evacuation drills required annually by [BC Fire Code 2.8.3.2](#), lockdown drills, and earthquake drills. To comply with licensing regulations, our preschool/kindergarten programs have four more fire drills each year than the elementary/middle school programs and advise staff in advance of emergency/evacuation drills.

We review our fire safety plans on an annual basis, as per the BC Fire Code, to “ensure it takes account of the changes in use and other characteristics of the building”. Changes to school fire safety plans, including fire drill procedures, will be developed in cooperation with the local fire department.

Emergency and evacuation planning, and drills will consider communicable disease prevention plans. In the event of an actual emergency, communicable disease prevention measures can be suspended to ensure for a timely, efficient, and safe response.

Environmental Practices

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

We regularly clean and disinfect to help prevent the transmission of communicable diseases from contaminated objects and surfaces. We clean frequently touched surfaces twice a day and when visibly dirty.

Products & Procedures

For **cleaning**, we use water and detergent (e.g., liquid dishwashing soap), or common, commercially available products, along with good cleaning practices. For hard-to-reach areas, use a brush and rinse thoroughly prior to disinfecting.

For **disinfection**, we use a commercial disinfectant listed on Health Canada's [hard surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#).

Follow these procedures when cleaning and disinfecting:

- Children wash hands before and after handling shared objects.
- Items and surfaces that a person has placed in their mouths or that have been in contact with bodily fluids should be cleaned as soon as possible and between uses by different people.
- Dishwasher-safe items can be cleaned and disinfected in a dishwasher with a hot rinse cycle.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Frequency

The following frequency guidelines must be adhered to when cleaning and disinfecting:

- General cleaning of the premises, and cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces, **at least once in a 24-hour period**. (See [Frequently Touched Surfaces](#) section below for examples of frequently touched surfaces.)
- Clean any surface that is visibly dirty.
- Empty garbage containers daily.

The requirements for daily cleaning and disinfecting outlined above do not apply to spaces/equipment that are not being used by students, staff or visitors.

Frequently Touched Surfaces

Frequently touched surfaces are items touched by larger numbers of students and staff. They can include:

- Doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains and toilet handles, as well as,
- Shared equipment (e.g., computer keyboards, PE/sports and music equipment), appliances (e.g., microwaves) and
- Service counters (e.g., library circulation desk).

Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g., fabrics) or at all (e.g., sand, foam, playdough, etc.) can be used. Carpets and rugs can also be used.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Bodily Fluids

We follow these procedures, in conjunction with school/district policies, when cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine):

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Follow regular health and safety procedure and regularly used PPE (e.g., gloves, protective or woven sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids (e.g., toileting, spitting, biting).

LAUNDRY

Schools can use regular laundering practices.

GENERAL VENTILATION AND AIR CIRCULATION

Our heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated, and maintained according to standards and specifications of [Part 4 of the OHS Regulation](#). We use a combination of outdoor air supply and filtration to significantly influence indoor air quality. This includes regularly maintained HVAC systems using MERV 13 filters.

Our site-based plans include provisions for when our ventilation system is temporarily compromised (e.g., partial power outage, ventilation break down).

To enhance school ventilation, we will consider:

- Increasing air exchanges by adjusting the HVAC system.
- Managing air distribution through building automation control systems.
- Where possible, opening windows if weather permits and HVAC system function will not be negatively impacted.

When using air conditioners and fans in ventilated spaces, air should be moved from high places to lower places instead of blowing air directly from one person's breathing zone to another's. Avoid horizontal cross breezes.

Natural ventilation (operable windows, etc.) and portable HEPA filter units will be considered in regularly occupied classrooms that do not have mechanical ventilation systems.

Use of portable air conditioners and fans in unventilated spaces with doors and windows closed should be avoided, except when necessary (e.g., during high or excessive heat events). Schools are encouraged to use BCCDC resources, including on Heat Event Response Planning and Wildfire Smoke, in planning for excessive heat events.

See the WorkSafeBC website and ASHRAE Reopening of Schools and Universities Guidance for more information on ventilation and air exchange.

HAND HYGIENE

Rigorous hand washing with plain soap and water or using an effective [hand sanitizer](#) reduces the spread of illness. We follow these guidelines to ensure effective hand hygiene in schools:

- We facilitate regular opportunities for hand hygiene:
 - We use portable hand-washing sites and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer dispensers containing at least 60% alcohol.
 - Schools should use [commercial hand sanitizer products that have met Health Canada's requirements and are authorized for sale in Canada](#).
- We ensure hand hygiene supplies are always well stocked including soap, paper towels (or air dryer) and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand rub may not be effective at eliminating microbes. Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, use an alcohol-based hand wipe followed by alcohol-based hand rub.

Administrative Practices

HEALTH AWARENESS

We will ensure that staff, other adults entering the school, parents, caregivers, and students are aware that they **should not come to school if they are sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities**. We will support this practice by communicating the importance of everyone doing a health check.

A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness (including but not limited to [COVID-19 symptoms](#) that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent spread of communicable diseases, such as COVID-19, within school settings.

Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

We will ensure that everyone entering a school is aware and routinely reminded of their responsibility to practice health awareness, including that they should not come to school if they are sick. We will support this through communications (e.g., emails/letters to parents and staff), orientation activities (e.g. meetings, videos) and other reminders (e.g. signage on doors).

ILLNESS PRACTICES / WHAT TO DO WHEN SICK

What To Do When Sick

Staff, students, or other persons who are exhibiting new symptoms of illness (including symptoms of [COVID-19](#) or gastrointestinal illness) should stay home and follow the BCCDC guidance outlined below.

If the person is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms:

- The [When to Get Tested for COVID-19 resource](#) or the [B.C. Self-Assessment Tool](#) provides more information on whether you should get a test for COVID-19. Those unsure or concerned about their symptoms should connect with a health care provider or call 8-1-1.
- Staff, children, or other persons in the school setting who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the guidance on the [BCCDC website](#) as to how long they should self-isolate. They can return to school when they no longer need to self-isolate as long as symptoms have improved, and they are well enough to participate in regular activities. Schools should not require a health care provider note (e.g., a doctor's note) to confirm the health status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practice.

If the person is experiencing other symptoms, isn't recommended to take a COVID-19 test (most people) or tests negative for COVID-19:

- Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved

enough to where they feel well enough to return to regular activities and their fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen). Information specific to COVID-19 is available from [BCCDC](#).

- Students, staff, and other adults should follow public health guidance, BCCDC guidance, and/or the recommendation of their health care provider when they are sick.

What To Do When Sick at School/Work

If a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms of illness at school and is unable to participate in regular activities, we will support them to go home until their symptoms have improved. We will take appropriate infection control precautions while the person is preparing to leave the school premises, including use of appropriate hand hygiene and cleaning/disinfection of surfaces soiled with bodily fluids. They may use a mask if they are experiencing respiratory symptoms.

In particular, children will be sent home if experiencing vomiting, diarrhea or fever. They will be isolated from the class while waiting to be picked up. Children can return to school once symptom free for 24 hours without medication. For specific conditions, viruses and diseases, we will refer to the most current Island Health or HealthLinkBC guidelines.

We have established procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work, including:

- Continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one (for both the person who is sick and for those who may be assisting them).
- Make arrangements for the student/staff to go home as soon as possible (e.g., contact student's parent/caregiver for pick-up).
- Have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and are separated from others. Younger children will be supervised when separated. Supervising staff will wear a non-medical mask and will avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible and practice diligent hand hygiene.
- Staff responsible for facility cleaning will clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the person's bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others. Cleaning/disinfecting the entire room the person was in (a "terminal" clean) is not required in these circumstances.
- We will request that the individual stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities.

SUPPORTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES/DIVERSE ABILITIES AND/OR RECEIVING HEALTH SERVICES

Expectations

Schools are expected to implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.

In-class instruction may not be suitable for some children (or families) with severe immune compromise or medical complexity, which should be determined on a case-by-case basis with a medical care provider. We will follow regular practices for those needing alternative learning arrangements due to immune compromise or medical complexity to ensure access to learning and supports.

Guidelines For Staff And/Or Those Working With Students With Disabilities/Diverse Abilities, Complex Behaviours, Medical Complexities, Or Receiving Delegated Care Where Physical Contact May Be Required

Staff and those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving direct or delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities who are in close proximity to a student should follow routine infection control practices and care plans for the child, if applicable.

Parents and caregivers of children who are considered at higher risk of severe illness due to communicable disease (including COVID-19) are encouraged to consult with their health care provider to determine their child's level of risk. Students are not required to wear a mask or face covering when receiving services, though may continue to base on their or their parent/caregiver's personal choice.

We will continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one.

SPACE ARRANGEMENT

We will use classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

BUSES

The following strategies are recommended for student transportation on buses:

- Schools can follow normal seating and onloading/offloading practices.
- Buses used for transporting students should be cleaned and disinfected according to the guidance provided in the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) section of this document.
- Bus drivers and students should be encouraged to practice [hand hygiene](#) and [respiratory etiquette](#).
- Bus drivers, teachers and students in kindergarten to Grade 8 may choose to wear masks or face coverings when they are on the bus.

OTHER METHODS OF TRANSPORTATION

For students, staff and visitors taking mass transit (e.g., municipal buses, SkyTrain, ferries, etc.), hand hygiene will be practiced before and after trips. Riders should follow any other safety guidance (including mask guidance) issued by the relevant transit authority.

We will continue to encourage methods of active transportation (e.g., walking, biking, skateboarding, etc.) wherever possible due to the overall health benefits.

VISITOR ACCESS/COMMUNITY USE

We ensure visitors are aware of and follow the school's Communicable Disease Prevention Plan, including personal practices. This includes posting information by the entrance to the school, on the school's website and including it in communications to students and families.

After hours community use of facilities will occur in alignment with activities permitted as per relevant local, regional, provincial, and federal public health recommendations and Orders.

We will use an inclusive and trauma-informed lens when planning school gatherings and events.

CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS AND ACTIVITIES

All of our curriculum, programs and activities, operate in alignment with our communicable disease prevention plans, including school-led activities held off campus * (e.g., sports academies, community-based programs/courses). We will continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

* Students and staff may also be required to follow the prevention measures required by the off-campus facility. Where there is a conflict, the stricter measures should be followed.

Field Trips

When planning field trips, staff will follow existing policies and procedures as well as the guidance in this document. Additional measures specific to field trips should be taken, including:

- We consider guidance provided for overnight camps from BCCDC and the BC Camps Association when planning overnight trips that include group accommodation.
- We make every effort to avoid venue/locations that place additional requirements that could prevent a person from being able to participate, particularly students. If this is not possible (and the field trip/travel cannot occur otherwise), schools can require participants to confirm they are able to meet the additional requirements (e.g., are able to provide proof of vaccination).
- Students and staff may also be required to follow the communicable disease prevention plan of places attended on a field trip. Where there is a conflict with a school's communicable disease prevention plan, the more stringent safety protocols should be followed.

Preschool Kindergarten Program and Entry

- We include information about communicable disease prevention measures that will be in place as part of communications to students and their families prior to school start.
- Parents/caregivers must follow [guidelines for visitors](#).
- We provide opportunities for Kindergarten students to learn and practice respecting personal space, recognizing they are unlikely to be able to do this at all times.
- We gently remind students of the expectations throughout the day and encourage students to kindly support one another.
- Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.) and carpets and rugs (e.g., for circle time activities) can be used.

Music / Physical and Health Education (PHE) / Outdoor / Food and Culinary / Theatre, Film and Dance / Other Shared Equipment Programs

Shared equipment will be cleaned and disinfected as per the [Cleaning and Disinfecting](#) guidelines and students should be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after shared equipment use.

Equipment that touches the mouth (e.g., instrument mouth pieces, water bottles, utensils) or has been in contact with bodily fluids should not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

School Libraries / Learning Commons

Regular book browsing and circulation processes can occur as per routine practice.

Personal Practices

HEALTH AWARENESS

Everyone at school should practice health awareness, including staying home when sick.

MASKS AND FACE COVERINGS

The decision to wear a mask or face covering, beyond when it is recommended by public health, is a personal choice for staff, students and visitors. A person's choice should be supported and respected. Information on non-medical masks is available from [BCCDC](#). We continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one, or who become ill at school.

HAND HYGIENE

Staff and students should be encouraged to practice frequent hand hygiene. To learn about how to perform hand hygiene, please refer to the BCCDC's hand hygiene poster.

RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

Parents and staff can teach and reinforce good respiratory etiquette practices among students, including:

- Cough or sneeze into their elbow or a tissue.
- Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

PERSONAL SPACE

Staff and students should be encouraged to respect others personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).

SHARING FOOD, BEVERAGES AND OTHER ITEMS THAT TOUCH THE MOUTH

Staff and students should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g., food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, vaping devices).

Shared-use items that touch the mouth should be cleaned between use by different individuals (e.g., water bottles, instrument mouth pieces).

PROTOCOLS FOR MANAGING COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ACTIVITY AT SCHOOL

Public health (including Medical Health Officers) play the lead role in managing communicable disease activity (including COVID-19) at schools. More information is available in the [COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff](#).