



Communicable Disease Prevention Plan 2023 - 2024



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SECTION 1 - RECOVERY

This revised plan (updated September 15th, 2022) has been developed in alignment with the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K – 12 Setting](#) (Updated September 20th, 2022) in British Columbia. The goal of this document is to support education employees, students, parents, caregivers, administrators and school community members to:

- Be informed about communicable disease measures and how they support a safe school environment.
- Understand their roles and responsibilities in maintaining and promoting safe and healthy schools.

KEY PRINCIPLES

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted, and continues to impact students, staff and families in many ways, with some longer-term impacts of the pandemic yet to be realized. The following principles will continue to guide the K-12 sector throughout the 2023-24 school year:

- Communicable disease prevention measures will continue to be aligned with public health guidance to support student and staff wellness.
- Using an inclusive and trauma-informed lens, with a focus on mental health and wellness.
- Focusing supports to address unique student and staff needs, recognizing the pandemic has impacted individuals and communities differently.
- Engaging and collaborating with parents/caregivers, staff, unions and community partners to develop local solutions when needed.
- As required by [WorkSafeBC](#), all boards of education, independent school authorities & schools must ensure the health of their workers by ensuring that steps are taken to reduce the risk to workers from communicable diseases.
- The Provincial Health Officer or local Medical Health Officers may issue temporary provincial, regional or local recommendations or orders of additional prevention measures during times of increased communicable disease risk.



SECTION 2: COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PREVENTION GUIDANCE

SUPPORTIVE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENTS

Schools can be supportive environments for communicable disease prevention by:

- Having staff model personal practices (e.g., hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette), and assist younger students as needed.
- Sharing reliable information, including from the BC Centre for Disease Control, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and local health authorities to parents, families and caregivers.
- Promoting personal practices in the school (e.g., posters).
- Ensuring individual choices for personal practices (e.g., choosing to wear a mask or face covering) are supported and treated with respect, recognizing varying personal comfort levels.

Communicable Disease Prevention Plans

Communicable disease prevention plans focus on reducing the risk of transmission of communicable diseases (including COVID-19). Schools are expected to document and make their plans readily available (e.g., post on school/school district websites, on a bulletin board at the school, etc.).

The prevention measures outlined below should be always in place. During times of increased communicable disease risk, public health may recommend additional prevention measures for schools to implement. Communicable disease prevention plans should be updated when temporary additional measures are in place.

The schools should review their communicable disease prevention plans when this guidance is updated, and/or on an annual basis or as circumstances require and should do so with their Site Committees and Joint Health and Safety Committees. Reviews should address areas where there are identified gaps in implementation.

EMERGENCY AND EVACUATION DRILLS

Emergency and evacuation planning, and drills should 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 DISINFECTING

BCCDC Guidance

Regular cleaning and disinfection can help prevent the spread of communicable diseases. Cleaning of frequently touched surfaces should occur in line with regular practices and when visibly dirty.

Since the start of the pandemic, schools have implemented enhanced cleaning practices as part of efforts to minimize the spread of communicable disease. This has resulted in new skills and approaches, and a greater appreciation of the role of cleaning and disinfection in supporting student and staff well-being and the enjoyment of school facilities. As schools build on this experience to determine what their ongoing, regular cleaning and disinfection practices will be, they are encouraged to maintain and incorporate enhanced practices whenever feasible, as part of sustainable communicable disease management.

• **Products & Procedures**

- For **cleaning**, use water and detergent (e.g., liquid dishwashing soap), or common, commercially available products, along with good cleaning practices.
- For **disinfection**, use common, commercially available disinfectants listed on Health Canada's hard-surface disinfectants for use against coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Follow these procedures when cleaning and disinfecting:
 - Always 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.
 - A dishwasher can be used to clean and sanitize dishwasher-safe items if the sanitize setting is used with adequately hot water.

General Cleaning

- Regular practices should include general cleaning of the premises.



Frequently Touched Surfaces

- Cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched surfaces should occur at least once in a 24-hour period and when visibly dirty.
- 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), and may change from day to day based on utilization.
- 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 disinfection activities should focus on spaces that have been utilized by staff or students.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING BODILY FLUIDS

- Follow these procedures 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 procedures 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

BCCDC Guidance

Continue to ensure all mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated, and maintained as per standards and specifications for ongoing comfort of workers (Part 4 of the OHS Regulation), and that they are working properly.

Open windows when the weather permits if it doesn't impact the functioning of ventilation systems.



Taking students outside more often is no longer necessary for communicable disease prevention.

HAND HYGIENE

Schools should:

- Facilitate regular opportunities for hand hygiene:
 - This can include using 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
- Ensure hand hygiene supplies are always well stocked including soap, paper towels (or air drier) and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand sanitizer 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.

RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

BCCDC Guidance

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.

Administrative Practices

HEALTH AWARENESS

BCCDC Guidance

School administrators should 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**. School administrators can 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.

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:

- 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).
- Some students or staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, schools should have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and are separated from others.
- Younger children must be supervised when separated.
- Supervising staff can wear a non-medical mask and should avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible and practice diligent hand hygiene.
- Staff responsible for facility cleaning should 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.
- Request that the individual stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities.

SPACE ARRANGEMENT

BCCDC Guidance

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



BUSES

For school buses, schools can follow normal seating and onloading/offloading practices.

- Buses used for transporting students should be cleaned and disinfected in line with the cleaning and disinfection practices outlined above.
- Bus drivers and students should be encouraged to practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Bus drivers, teachers and students in kindergarten to Grade 12 may choose to wear masks or face coverings when they are on the bus.

VISITOR ACCESS/COMMUNITY USE

Visitors, including community groups using the school, should follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.

CURRICULUM, PROGRAMS & ACTIVITIES

Schools should implement communicable disease prevention practices (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

Field Trips

When planning field trips, staff should follow existing policies and procedures as well as the guidance in this document. Schools should consider guidance provided for overnight camps from BCCDC and the BC Camps Association when planning overnight trips that include group accommodation.



Personal Practices

HEALTH AWARENESS

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

MASKS & FACE COVERINGS

- Promoting the school environment as supportive for wearing masks through mask- specific messaging at assemblies and in announcements, signs, and written communications. Include that some people wear masks to reduce their risk of communicable disease, and it is important to be kind and respectful of other’s choices.
- Continued school-wide efforts to create safe and inclusive learning environments, free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectations that any bullying or other disrespectful behaviour or conduct related to personal mask use choice is unacceptable. Address behaviour in line with protocols and practices for addressing disrespectful behaviour (e.g., student codes of conduct).

The decision to wear a mask or face covering is a personal choice for staff, students, and visitors. Some people may choose to continue to wear a mask because they are more comfortable wearing a mask or because they, or someone in their family, may be at higher risk and want to take extra precautions. Some may choose to continue to wear them throughout the school day, or only during specific activities. A person’s choice should be supported and respected. This should include:

- Promoting the school environment as supportive for wearing masks through mask- specific messaging at assemblies and in announcements, signs, and written communications. Include that some people wear masks to reduce their risk of communicable disease, and it is important to be kind and respectful of other’s choices.
- Continued school-wide efforts to create safe and inclusive learning environments, free from discrimination, bullying and harassment.
- Set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectations that any bullying or other disrespectful behaviour or conduct related to personal mask use choice is unacceptable. Address behaviour in line with protocols and practices for addressing disrespectful behaviour (e.g., student codes of conduct).



Masks are one layer of protection used to prevent the spread of communicable disease. To be most effective, wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measure such as getting all the recommended doses of vaccine, staying home when sick, and regularly practicing hand hygiene. Masks are most effective when fitted, worn and handled correctly.

- 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.

HAND HYGIENE

Staff, students and visitors 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:

SHARING FOOD, BEVERAGES & 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).

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