



Jan. 4th, 2022

Updated Guidelines for Schools K-12 (COVID-19)



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COVID-19 Public Health Update for K-12 Schools

UPDATED: Jan. 4th, 2022

Due to the recent rise in cases of COVID-19 in BC and the emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant, public health has recommended time-limited enhancements to the Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools. While these enhanced measures may provide additional layers of protection, vaccines continue to be the most effective way to reduce the risk of COVID-19 within K-12 school settings. Everyone eligible is strongly encouraged to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

The infection prevention and exposure control measures in place have been shown to be effective at stopping or limiting transmission of COVID-19 within schools. However, there are areas where renewed attention and focus are needed. These include additional safety measures to be in place for:

- Gatherings and Events
- Space Arrangements
- Visitors, and
- Limiting crowding in common spaces

Additional Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures

The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures to reduce the transmission of COVID-19 in schools. Control measures at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of COVID-19 is substantially reduced.

This document includes a list of infection prevention and exposure control measures to be implemented in schools according to the hierarchy of control measures, as follows:

- Environmental Measures
- Administrative Measures
- Personal Measures
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

The control measures listed in this document are to be implemented in addition to the control measures that are already in place as outlined in each school's Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan. Administrators are to ensure that these control measures are in place by Jan. 10, 2022 and that the school JHSC is involved in the process. Administrators will confirm the implementation of the additional control measures by submitting the school's "[COVID-19 Additional Prevention Measures Checklist - January 2022](#)" to the District and will post the update with their current Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan. Any site specific COVID-19 safety items identified that are not addressed in this update will require a [Site Specific COVID-19 Risk Assessment](#) to be conducted and all completed assessments are to be included in the school's Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan.

Administrators are to review the updated Site Specific COVID-19 Safety Plan with all staff prior to Jan. 10, 2022.

District COVID-19 Safety Plan Addendum

The Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings Addendum Dec. 29, 2021 outlines focused actions and additional prevention measures B.C. public and independent K-12 schools must implement in response to the recent rise of cases of COVID-19 due to the emergence of the more transmissible Omicron variant. It builds on the Addendum – Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools developed by the BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC) to ensure schools have effective measures in place to prevent the transmission of COVID-19. This addendum is in place until rescinded. The focused actions and additional prevention measures to be implemented may include:

Environmental Measures

Ventilation and Air Exchange

- All HVAC systems are operated and maintained as per standards and specifications and are working properly.
- Portable fans or air conditioning units set up to move air downward and not blowing air directly from one person's breathing zone to other occupants of a room. Horizontal cross breezes have been avoided.
- Air systems have been upgraded to MERV 13 filters or other mitigation efforts have been identified.
- Risk mitigation strategies have been identified for excessive heat events or times of poor air quality.
- Windows are opened if weather permits, and HVAC system function will not be negatively impacted.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

- Frequently touched surfaces (those touched by larger numbers of people) are to be cleaned and disinfected at least 1x/day. Surfaces touched by fewer people are to be cleaned 1x/day.
- Practices are in place to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces when they are dirty.
- Other general cleaning to occur in line with regular practices.
- Practices are to be in place to clean and disinfect any surfaces a person's body fluids have contacted after they have displayed symptoms of illness.

Administrative Measures

Daily Health Check

- Staff and other adults are to complete a daily health check prior to entering the school.
- Parents and students have been reminded of their responsibilities to complete a Daily Health Check and are provided with resources on how to complete one (e.g., the K-12 Health Check app).
- If a student, staff or other adult is sick, they are not permitted to enter the school.
- Practices are in place to appropriately respond when a staff member, student, or other person develops symptoms of illness while at school.

Gatherings, Events and Space Arrangement

- Space between people is to be maximized. Different common space, classroom, and learning environment configurations (e.g., different desk and table formations). Limit and, whenever possible, avoid face-to-face seating arrangements.
- Staff-only gatherings (e.g., staff meetings, in-service and professional development activities) are to be held virtually.
- Learning spaces are to be arranged to maximize the space available and to avoid people directly facing one another (where possible).
- In indoor spaces, people must have enough room to carry out intended activities without involuntary physical contact.
- Strategies that prevent crowding during class transition and break times are to be implemented. Stagger start/stop times, or recess/snack, lunch, and class transition times. Regular learning activities that bring together multiple classes (e.g., examinations, physical education) should be spread out across multiple locations/spaces whenever possible, but do not need to be reduced in size.
- School gatherings and events (e.g., assemblies, parent-teacher interviews, etc.) to be held virtually. If gatherings and events must be in-person (e.g., inter-school sports game, theatre productions), minimize the number of people in attendance as much as possible, do not exceed 50% operating capacity, and do not allow spectators. For indoor spaces without a defined operating capacity, schools should determine a capacity limit that is at most half the number of individuals that would be within the space for that activity or event if prevention measures weren't in place.

Visitor Access

- Limit visitors to those that are supporting activities that are of direct benefit to student learning and wellbeing. E.g., teacher candidates, immunizers, meal program volunteers, etc.
- Process in place to ensure itinerant staff, Teachers On-Call and visitors are aware of the school's health and safety measures and their responsibility to follow them at all times.

Sports

- Extracurricular sports tournaments are to be paused.

Student Transportation

- Frequently touched surfaces are cleaned and disinfected at least 1x/day. Surfaces touched by fewer people are cleaned 1x/day.
- Practices are in place to clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces when they are dirty.
- Other general cleaning occurs in line with regular practices.
- Everyone on the bus (without exemptions), wear masks in accordance with the PHO Order on Face Coverings.
- Practices are in place to encourage bus drivers and passengers to practice hand hygiene before and after trips.
- Passengers are spread out if empty seats are available.
- Windows are opened when the weather allows.

Personal Measures

- Hand cleaning facilities are available and accessible throughout the school and are well maintained.
- Strategies are in place to routinely support students to practice personal prevention measures like wearing a mask and hand hygiene (e.g., signage, including in morning announcements, etc.).
- Strategies are in place to encourage staff and students to consider and respect others personal space. Personal space is the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person.
- Positive and inclusive approaches aligned with existing school/sector practices to address behaviour/personal practices are used.

Personal Protective Equipment

Reminders communicated to students (and their parents/caregivers) and staff that includes:

- Wearing masks at school is required under a public health order. Masks are most effective when everyone who is able to is wearing one.
 - Proper fit is a key factor in mask effectiveness. Masks worn at school should fit well.
 - Those with mask exemptions continue to follow any strategies identified to reinforce and enhance other safety measures.
 - Those not able to wear a mask all day continue to be encouraged to wear one as much as they're able to.
 - Administrators and staff should use positive and inclusive approaches, aligned with existing professional practices to address non-compliant behaviour for those able to wear masks. For those with mask exemptions, administrators and staff support other strategies identified to reinforce and enhance other safety measures (as outlined in the [Planning Resource: Mask Exemptions](#)). For those with mask exemptions, alternative strategies identified are adjusted if needed, based on the additional prevention measures.
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Masks

- The PHO Order – Face Coverings requires all students, staff, and visitors to wear a mask indoors at school. Everyone who is able to (i.e., does not have a mask exemption) must wear a mask.
- Schools will work with those with mask exemptions to explore potential strategies to reinforce and enhance other safety measures, as described in the COVID-19 Planning Resource: Mask Exemptions.
- Masks are available for those who have forgotten theirs.

Additional Resources

- [Link to Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)
- [Link to Addendum – Public Health Guidance for K-12 Schools](#)
- [Link to PHO Order- Face Coverings](#)
- [Link to COVID-19 Planning Resources: Mask Exemptions](#)