

XXXX: COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (AP)

Approved: 86 02 18

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ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE:

KEY PRINCIPLES:

The following principles should be applied to communicable disease prevention and management in schools:

- Aligning communicable disease prevention measures 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 different impacts that communicable diseases may have on individuals and communities.
- Engaging and collaborating with parents/caregivers, staff, unions and community partners to develop local solutions when needed.
- As required by WorkSafeBC, must ensure the health of their workers by ensuring 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.

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 and First Nations Health Authority 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.

VACCINES:

Vaccines are important tools to protect against serious outcomes of many communicable diseases. Students and staff are encouraged to ensure they are up to date on all recommended vaccines for communicable diseases.

OHS REGULATION:

School boards and independent school authorities must follow WorkSafe BC guidance and must provide communication, training, and orientation to ensure the health and safety of their workers. WorkSafe communicable disease prevention guidance is aligned with the guidance provided by BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC). Please see their website for specific requirements and additional information.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTION:

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. As part of sustainable communicable disease management, schools are encouraged to maintain and incorporate enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices, whenever feasible and in consultation with the custodial department.

VENTILATION AND AIR EXCHANGE:

The combination of outdoor air supply and filtration can significantly influence indoor air quality and help prevent the spread of communicable disease. The Operations Department will regularly maintain HVAC systems for proper operation, complying with applicable ASHRAE standards for indoor air quality.

PERSONAL 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.
- Ensure hand hygiene supplies are always well stocked including soap, paper towels (or air drier) and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub with 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.

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

The decision to wear a mask is a personal one, based on individual preference. Some students and staff may choose to continue to wear a non-medical mask or face covering throughout the day or for certain activities. The choice of staff and students to choose whether they practice additional

personal prevention measures should be respected. Information on non-medical masks is available from BCCDC.

HEALTH CHECK:

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 not attending school if sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities.

A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent spread of communicable diseases within the school settings. Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

SAFE HANDLING OF BODILY FLUIDS

All staff members must treat any contact with bodily fluids—including blood, vomit, urine, feces, and saliva—as potentially infectious. Disposable gloves should be worn whenever handling bodily fluids, and contaminated materials must be cleaned using approved disinfectants effective against common pathogens. Spills should be contained immediately, cleaned using proper absorbent materials, and disposed of in designated biohazard or sealed waste containers. Staff must wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water after glove removal and after completing any cleanup procedure.

RESOURCES:

- Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- WorkSafeBC Communicable disease prevention (G-P2-21)
- WorkSafeBC Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers
- WorkSafeBC Communicable disease prevention webpage
- Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings, Province of British Columbia
- ImmunizeBC, Province of British Columbia
- BC Centre for Disease Control