

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS (K-12) AND SCHOOL BUSES

Overview

Routine public health practices can minimize transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza and common colds. These practices include: proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, maintaining ventilation systems, staying home when sick and getting vaccinated.

The guidance provided in this document is intended to support school and school authority leaders in reducing opportunities for transmission of COVID-19 in schools under the 2021-22 School Year Plan. This includes:

- a) practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees;
- b) procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness, and
- c) maintenance of high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene.

All schools are required to follow this guidance to the extent possible. Schools/School authorities should establish their own COVID-19 plans based on this guidance. Where any part of this guidance is inconsistent or in conflict with enhanced or stronger public health restrictions set out in another CMOH Order, the enhanced or stronger public health measures would prevail.

Schools refers to public, separate, francophone, charter schools, independent (private) school authorities, independent (private) Early Childhood Services (ECS), online/distance education programs, home education programs and First Nations education authorities, from kindergarten through grade twelve. School-based and curriculum-based activities that may be impacted by this guidance include sports, music and field trips into the community or to other schools, and professional development/activity days.

This information is relevant to all schools in Alberta including those on reserve, recognizing that First Nation schools on reserve are a federal responsibility. For public health information, COVID-19 questions or for reporting purposes, First Nation schools should contact their local Health Centre or Indigenous Services Canada-First Nations and Inuit Health Branch Environmental Public Health Services (ISC-FNIHB) office (see Appendix A), in accordance with normal practice.

It is important that measures be implemented in all settings to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This includes, but is not limited to ensuring: physical distancing, masking, barrier use (where appropriate), proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, records management and building maintenance. Schools and school authorities must also follow the requirements set out in the [General Operational Guidance](#) and [CMOH orders in effect](#).

Zone Medical Officers of Health (MOHs) and their designates are available to support school authorities throughout the province. Their role is to provide guidance on communicable disease risk as well as risk management. If you have concerns, need specific guidance, or have questions about how to apply the measures in this document, please contact Environmental Public Health in your Zone for assistance (see Appendix A).

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COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

Vaccination	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Currently, all Albertans born in 2009 or before (turning 12 in 2021 or older) are eligible for a COVID-19 vaccine.• Vaccines provide a significant level of protection against severe outcomes from COVID-19. Two doses of the COVID-19 vaccine have been shown to be highly protective against infection, and most importantly against severe disease.• Alberta Health Services (AHS) Public Health is working collaboratively with schools across Alberta to offer a dose of COVID-19 vaccine to eligible staff and students in Grade 7 to 12 born in 2009 or earlier.• As children born in 2010 or later (11 and under) are currently not eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine, it is important that those around them, including parents/guardians, older students and school staff, receive the vaccine in order to reduce community transmission and protect this age group.
General Building Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• HVAC systems should be maintained in accordance with manufacturer operational guidelines. For more information on building ventilation, please refer to the General Operational Guidance and School Indoor Air Quality (IAQ) - Mechanical Ventilation in Schools (albertahealthservices.ca).• Schools should have procedures that outline hand hygiene requirements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Hand hygiene frequency should be based on activity (e.g., entering/leaving school or classroom, boarding/exiting the bus, changing activities, before and after using shared equipment, before and after eating, putting on/removing a mask, after using washrooms, etc.)○ Handwashing with soap and water where possible is very effective.○ Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol should be placed in convenient locations throughout the school where soap and water may not be available, such as in entrances, exits and near high touch surfaces. If parents have questions about their child using alcohol-based hand sanitizer they should contact their school administration to discuss potential alternatives.○ Hand sanitizer can cause serious harm if ingested. Keep out of reach of younger children/students, supervise them during use and place hand sanitizer in monitored areas.• Schools should have procedures that outline cleaning requirements:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Increase frequency of cleaning (removing visible dirt) and disinfection (killing germs) of high-touch areas and equipment (e.g.,

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	<p>desks, doorknobs, handrails, microwave ovens, vending machines, etc.) inside and outside classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Common area surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected frequently throughout the day.○ Student contact surfaces (e.g., desks and equipment) should be cleaned and disinfected between each student/user. Restrict sharing of supplies as much as possible.○ Students should be provided with an area to store personal items. Individual assigned lockers may be used. Follow general guidance for cleaning and minimize crowding around lockers.○ Disinfectants used must have a Drug Information Number (DIN) and a broad-spectrum virucidal claim OR a virucidal claim against non-enveloped viruses or coronaviruses. Alternatively, 1000 ppm bleach solution can be used.○ Follow the instructions on the product label to disinfect effectively.○ More information on cleaning and disinfection can be accessed in the General Operational Guidance. Further recommendations are available in the AHS COVID-19 public health recommendations for environmental cleaning of public facilities.● Water fountains can remain open. Mouthpieces of drinking fountains are not a major source of virus transmission and require regular cleaning according to manufacturer recommendations.● Use hand hygiene before and after handling items, including paper tests and assignments.● Items that cannot be cleaned or disinfected between routine use (e.g., paper books) can be stored for 24 hours.● Additional Alberta Health Services resources:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ AHS Infection Prevention & Control posters○ Hand Washing Posters (AHS)<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Poster 1▪ Poster 2○ How to Hand Wash (AHS) poster○ How to use alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer (AHS) poster
Screening	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Before leaving home, staff (including substitute teachers), children/students, visitors, and volunteers who will access the school for work or education, are expected to self-screen for symptoms each day that they enter the school using the applicable checklist for their age group (Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist or Adult Alberta Health Daily Checklist).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents and children/students should be provided a copy of the screening checklist. This can be a hard copy or a link to the digital copy of the screening checklist.• Schools should have copies of the daily checklists available for visitors to the school.• Although health screening of staff, students and visitors is required, there is no requirement for verification or the collection and retention of formal records.• Schools should keep records of children’s known pre-existing medical conditions. If a child develops symptoms that could be caused by either COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g., allergies), the child should be tested at least once for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to school. Following a negative test result, such symptoms will be considered part of the student’s baseline health. Written confirmation by a physician that a student or staff member’s symptoms are due to a chronic illness is not necessary. Repeat testing is not indicated unless the nature of the symptom changes (e.g., a chronic cough worsens).• Anyone who reports symptoms should be directed to stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g., call Health Link 811, or their primary health care practitioner, or 911 for emergency response), and fill out the AHS Online Self-Assessment tool to determine if they should be tested.• Signs must be posted reminding persons not to enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms, even if symptoms resemble a mild cold.
<p>Cohorting in Kindergarten Through Grade 6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A cohort is defined as a group of students and/or staff who remain together.• Students in kindergarten through grade 6 are to remain in cohorts wherever possible. Typically a cohort in a school will be a class.• Limit the number of cohorts that students in kindergarten through grade 6 are involved in.• As much as operationally possible, limit the number of classroom cohorts that teachers belong to.• The size of the cohort will depend on the physical space of the classroom or learning setting. In very small schools (e.g., equivalent to a single class size), the school may be considered one cohort.• For the purposes of minimizing exposure, consider limiting the number of individuals in a room that allows for physical distancing (i.e., fewer students in a smaller room and more students in a larger room).

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Cohorting should be maintained during activities outside the classroom, such as recess and lunch breaks. If students from two different cohorts wish to socialize, they should remain 2 metres apart.• If two or more people from different cohorts are required to come within 2 metres of one another for the purposes of instruction, practice or undertaking examinations, additional protections should be instituted. Consider using engineering controls such as plexiglass barriers or partitions that extend across breathing zones and are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected between users, or administrative controls such as adapting the activity to minimize or eliminate close contacts.• Teachers who regularly interact within 2 metres of students in their class are considered part of the cohort. If teachers interact with more than one group of students without distancing, they are part of multiple cohorts.• If a teacher or staff member does not interact within 2 metres of students in their classes, they would not be considered part of the cohort.• Teachers/staff should not be in a cohort with each other, unless it is required for operational purposes. (i.e., a teacher and a teacher's assistant who work with the same classroom cohort).
Physical Distancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools should institute controls to promote physical distancing as much as possible between all students/staff in areas inside and outside of the classroom, including hallways, washrooms and common areas. This may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Staggering start and end times for classes to avoid crowded entrances or exits and hallways.○ Posting signs and marking floors with arrows to control the flow of traffic.○ Removing and restaging seating in public areas to prevent gathering.○ Considering limiting bathroom occupancy to support physical distancing.• It is still recommended to maintain physical distancing within a cohort whenever possible to minimize the risk for disease transmission (i.e., spacing between desks). Students are not expected to sit in their desks for the duration of the day.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ If 2 metres spacing cannot be arranged between desks/tables, the greatest possible spacing is recommended. Students should be arranged so they are not facing each other (e.g., arranged in rows rather than in small groups of 4 or a semi-circle). This way, if a

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	<p>student coughs or sneezes, they are not likely to cough or sneeze directly on the face of another student.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Consider removing additional items or pieces of equipment that are not in use from classrooms to allow more space to spread out.● In situations where physical distancing is not possible (e.g., on the bus, in classrooms and while participating in some sporting activities), or for younger grades with play-based curricula, there should be extra emphasis on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, not attending school when ill and cleaning and disinfecting on a regular basis before and after activities.● Schools should develop procedures for drop-off that support physical distancing where possible between all persons (except household members). Consider strategies to support physical distancing or utilize other protocols to limit contact between staff/parents/guardians/children/students as much as possible:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Designate entrances for classes/groups of students.○ Physical distancing markers in crowded areas.○ Stagger drop off/bus arrival times, coordinated with entry/exit.○ Encourage parents/guardians to remain outside during drop-off and pick-up.● Where possible, avoid large gatherings of students and staff (e.g., assemblies, in-person group professional development day activities).<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Offer virtual options instead of in person gatherings whenever possible.○ If virtual assemblies are not possible, keep cohorts (K-6) 2 metres apart. Students in grades 4 through 12, staff and visitors are required to wear a mask. Masks are recommended for students in kindergarten through grade 3.
Masks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Students, teachers, staff and visitors must follow provincial requirements for masks.● All students attending grades 4 through 12, staff members and visitors are required to wear a mask while in indoor shared areas of school, outside the classroom.● Masks are recommended for students attending kindergarten through grade 3.● Masks remain mandatory for all students, staff and visitors on a school bus. Please see current CMOH orders for additional information.● Masks are not required while students are seated in the classroom during instruction if students are working quietly and desks are arranged so students are not facing each other. If close contact

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between students, or students and teachers/staff is going to occur as a result of classroom activities, masks should be used for the duration of this activity.

- A teacher/staff may remove a mask when alone at a workstation and separated by at least two metres from all other persons.
- Face shields are not equivalent to non-medical face masks and are insufficient on their own. Other alternatives (e.g., neck gaiters, buffs or bandanas) offer less protection than masks and are therefore not recommended.
 - Face shields may be worn in addition to a mask, at the discretion of the individual. Staff may elect to wear a face shield or eye protection in addition to a mask when completing personal care of students or when staff are in close contact with students where droplets may be a risk factor (i.e., symptomatic students awaiting pick up by parents/guardians).
- Very few individuals may not be able to wear masks due to sensory or health issues. It is important to comply with other personal preventative practices such as frequent hand hygiene, physical distancing and strict cohorting as much as possible.
- Persons seeking a mask exception at a school should discuss their request with the school administration.
- Exceptions to the mask requirement for students in grades 4 through 12, staff and all visitors include:
 - Persons who are unable to place, use or remove a non-medical face mask without assistance;
 - Persons unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a mental or physical concern or limitation;
 - Persons consuming food or drink in designated areas;
 - Persons engaged in physical exercise;
 - Persons seated at a desk or table within a classroom or place where instruction is taking place and where the desks, tables and chairs are arranged in a manner to prevent persons who are seated from facing each other, and to allow the greatest possible distance between seated persons;
 - Persons providing or receiving care or assistance where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance, and
 - Persons separated from every other person by a physical barrier.
- School authorities may choose to implement more stringent masking requirements.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• School administrators/authorities should develop a plan to ensure that students who are hearing impaired or who rely on facial cues are able to communicate with others in areas where masks are being worn, or have their educational needs met when teachers are wearing masks in the classroom. This may include the use of transparent masks. As with other masks, it is important that transparent masks cover the nose and mouth, as well as fit securely against the face.• School staff should monitor for and address any discrimination or bullying associated with a student either wearing or not wearing a mask.• Parents/guardians should be encouraged to help their children become comfortable with wearing a mask. Masks should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to age, ability or developmental status).• Schools should consult their designated Occupational Health and Safety department for mask-wearing policies and other personal protective equipment policies for their staff.
Field Trips	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Off-site activities (e.g., field trips for group physical activity, performance activities and recreational activities that are part of the curriculum) must follow the school guidance, as well as any sector-specific restrictions relevant to the location of the field trip. This includes physical distancing, use of masks, cohorting for students in kindergarten through grade 6, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and enhanced cleaning and disinfection.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Individual classroom cohorts for students in kindergarten through grade 6 should be maintained during transportation to and from any external field trip site, as well as at the location of the field trip site. If two cohorts share a bus, separate the cohorts by 2 metres.○ Organizations providing off-site activities should comply with sector-specific restrictions.○ An organization or facility should only host one classroom cohort at a time, or should take clear steps to separate multiple groups to ensure they do not use shared areas (e.g., lunch rooms).○ Organization or facility staff at the off-site activity must maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from the visiting students and staff.○ Hold activities outdoors as much as possible.○ Schools should develop procedures to address students or staff developing symptoms during the field trip; plans should include a designated area to isolate the ill individual, what extra supplies may be needed (e.g., mask for the child, mask/face shield for the

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	<p>individual attending to the child, etc.), how to notify a parent/guardian and how the ill child will be transported home from the off-site activity.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools must follow the CMOH orders as they relate to curriculum-based educational activities and extra-curricular activities. For more information about current restrictions, see the webpage for public health actions. • In-school field trips may also occur. All visitors to the school are expected to follow the public health measures that are in place for the school.
<p>Performance Activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are able to participate in a group performance activity (i.e., singing, dancing, playing instruments, theatre) as part of their education program curriculum. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Maintain 2 metres physical distancing between participating students, where possible. ○ Singers and wind instrument musicians should keep 2 metres away from other performers and individuals at all times. ○ Wind instruments should be equipped with a cover intended to prevent droplet transmission. ○ In indoor settings, groups should not sing or play wind instruments for more than 30 minutes at a time, with a 10-minute break afterwards to allow for air exchange in the room. ○ When performance activities involve singing, all singers, including students in kindergarten through grade 3, are strongly encouraged to wear masks when singing indoors. ○ As singing is a higher risk activity, students who have an exception to masking can be provided with another musical part (e.g., percussion) or if the child will be singing, they should be alone in a dedicated space or room (e.g., a different classroom, using a virtual video participation option). ○ Spectator attendance at indoor performance activities is limited to 1/3 fire code capacity. Attendees must be masked and must maintain 2 metres physical distance between households. Individuals who live alone may sit with their two designated close contacts. • Students are able to participate in an extracurricular performance activity following the CMOH orders for general youth performance activities. For more information about current restrictions, see the webpage for public health actions.
<p>Physical Activity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are permitted to participate in group physical activity as part of an education program curriculum (i.e., physical education class and

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	<p>sports academy classes may occur). Participants must continue to follow the school guidance regarding cohorting (kindergarten through grade 6), physical distancing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, and use of non-medical masks when students are not physically active.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When possible, physical education should be done outside instead of inside as the risk of transmission is more likely to occur indoors rather than outdoors. ○ For physical education classes, administrators and teachers should, where possible, choose activities or sports that support physical distancing and limit face-to-face activities (e.g., badminton over wrestling). ○ Spectator attendance at indoor sports activities is limited to 1/3 fire code capacity. Attendees must be masked and must maintain 2 metres physical distance between households. Individuals who live alone may sit with their two designated close contacts. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students are able to participate in an extracurricular physical activity following the current CMOH orders for youth physical activity. For more information about current restrictions, see the webpage for public health actions.
<p>Expectations for Visitors and Other Service Providers Entering the School</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Visitors and volunteers are required to follow the school policies such as physical distancing, hand hygiene, staying home when ill and wearing a mask. ● Parents/guardians can attend the school if they are required (e.g., parents/guardians may drop off student lunches or other necessary items as required). ● When a visitor or service provider (including delivery drivers and independent contractors) enters the school they should be asked to use the applicable checklist for their age group (Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist or Adult Alberta Health Daily Checklist) before they enter the school. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If a visitor or service provider answers YES to any of the questions, the individual must not be admitted into the school. ○ In the case of a delivery driver answering YES, the driver/school will make alternate delivery arrangements.
<p>Food Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Classes that teach food preparation may occur as long as students follow general precautions, such as ensuring hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, wearing non-medical face masks, maintaining 2 metres physical distancing (where possible) and avoiding handling common or shared serving utensils or cookware.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Any food prepared during a class that teaches food preparation should be served by a designated person. Students should follow physical distancing measures while eating and during food preparation where possible.● Activities that involve the sharing of food items between students or staff should not occur (e.g., pot luck, buffet-style service).● Parents/teachers can provide food/treats for a classroom if there is a designated person serving the food and appropriate hand hygiene is followed before and after eating. Please follow the school's policy for parent-provided food.● For classroom meals and snacks:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Pre-packaged meals or meals served by designated staff should be the norm. No self-serve or family-style meal service should occur.○ There should be no common food items (e.g., salt and pepper shakers, ketchup bottle).○ Designated staff should serve food items using utensils (not fingers).● For food service program (e.g., cafeteria) establishments:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Group students in kindergarten through grade 6 in their cohorts for meal breaks. Use alternate processes to reduce the numbers of people dining together at one time.○ If a school is using a common lunchroom and staggering lunch times, ensure that all surfaces of the tables and chairs (including the underneath edge of the chair seat) are cleaned and disinfected after each use.○ Adapt other areas to serve as additional dining space to increase spacing among persons in the same room.○ Do not use buffet-style self-serve. Instead, switch to pre-packaged meals or meals served by staff.○ Dispense cutlery, napkins and other items to students/children, rather than allowing them to pick up their own items.
Responding to Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Schools should have detailed plans for a rapid response if a student, teacher, staff member or visitor becomes symptomatic while at school. This includes:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Sending home students or staff who are sick, where possible.○ Having a separate area for students and staff who are sick and waiting to go home.○ Providing a mask to students and staff with respiratory illness symptoms if they do not have one.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Disinfecting areas and items touched by the sick student or staff member.○ Staff members caring for an ill student should wear a mask.● Anyone with symptoms should be encouraged to access COVID-19 testing by accessing the AHS Online Testing tool.● Students experiencing fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of taste/smell must continue to isolate for 10 days from when their symptoms started or until they resolve, whichever is longer, OR until they receive a negative COVID-19 test result. For more information on isolation please visit alberta.ca/isolation.● Please see Appendix B for management of adults and children who are symptomatic and/or tested for COVID-19.● Proof of a negative COVID-19 test result is not necessary for a student, teacher or staff member to return to school.● It is strongly recommended that unimmunized or partially immunized household contacts of COVID-19 cases stay home for 14 days from the date of last household exposure.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ In addition, they should be monitored for symptoms for 14 days from the last day of household exposure, and if they develop any symptoms, should be taken for testing. For more information on isolation requirements for people with symptoms, please visit alberta.ca/isolation.
<p>Confirmed Cases of COVID-19</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Staff, students or parents/guardians may choose to notify school administrators/authorities of a positive COVID-19 test result.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Individuals are not required to share their COVID-19 test results with school administration.● AHS Public Health will not inform school authorities or administrators of individual cases of COVID-19 within their school setting, as notification to the school is not required for the individual's case management and close contact follow up is no longer occurring.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ AHS is no longer identifying or following up with individual close contacts, and quarantine for close contacts is no longer universally legally mandatory.○ All Albertans, including those who may be informed that they are close contacts by someone who has COVID-19, are asked to routinely monitor for symptoms and stay home and seek testing if they are feeling unwell, even if it feels like a minor illness.● School administrators/authorities can review what measures they currently have in place and may choose to consider additional precautions.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• There is no expectation for school administrators or school authorities to identify and notify possible close contacts, or to send broad notifications to parents/guardians.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ In all communications with staff, students or parents/guardians, it is important to ensure the confidentiality of an individual’s health information.• Classes should not be sent home or told not to come to school if there is a case within the class. It is important to remember that as the case is isolating and no longer at the school, the risk of transmission from that person has been removed from the school.• For more information on managing cases of COVID-19 in schools, see Appendix C.
Reporting and responding to high rates of absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• If there is a school-wide absence rate of 10% or greater due to illness OR there is an unusual number of individuals with similar symptoms within a cohort or class, report to AHS Coordinated Early Identification Response (CEIR) team at 1-844-343-0971, regardless of the schools’ participation in Alberta Real Time Syndromic Surveillance Network (ARTSSN).<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ The purpose of this reporting is to continue to monitor for clusters of respiratory or gastrointestinal illness and alert AHS to potential disease outbreaks.○ Superintendents/designates are to communicate to Alberta Education when they have reported 10% absenteeism or an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms to the AHS CEIR team. Alberta Education can be contacted at educationcovidguidance@gov.ab.ca.• Some examples of unusual numbers of ill students may include, but are not limited to:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ A large proportion of students in one classroom or one grade level who are ill with similar symptoms.○ A large proportion of students who may have participated in the same activity at the school, who are now ill.○ A number of parent/guardian-reported cases of COVID-19 in a group that was likely to have mixed closely, such as one classroom or one grade level with shared classes.• Contacting AHS to report absenteeism does not automatically mean an outbreak will be declared. Once AHS has been notified of absenteeism of 10% or an unusual number of individuals with similar symptoms, an investigation will be conducted by AHS Public Health to assess the situation and determine if an outbreak should be declared.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ They will contact the school to collect additional information such as type of symptoms, onset of symptoms, number of students/staff ill, and total school population. ○ In some instances, the school contact may not be able to provide all of the information required and will be asked to provide students' names and contact information so that Public Health can contact the parents of ill students to gather key information for their assessment. ○ School administrators/authorities are to work collaboratively with AHS Public Health under the authority of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH)/designate to provide information required for an outbreak investigation, as outlined in the <i>Alberta Public Health Act</i>.
<p>Outbreaks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Where absenteeism of 10% or greater has been identified by AHS due to illness OR there are an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms AHS will investigate and may declare an outbreak. The MOH/designate may recommend additional measures to reduce ongoing transmission for the duration of the outbreak, generally 14 days from when the outbreak was declared, unless absenteeism continues to increase. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Additional recommendations may include active health screening with questionnaires, increasing frequency of cleaning and disinfection, strictly maintaining cohorts, additional mask requirements, and/or limiting group/extra-curricular activities. ○ A Medical Officer of Health (MOH)/designate has the authority under the <i>Public Health Act</i> to recommend additional public health measures if they identify an unacceptable risk in a specific circumstance. Please follow all guidance and recommendations provided by the MOH/designate. ● A public health recommendation to temporarily close a school and shift students to online learning due to COVID-19 cases in the school is not expected to occur frequently. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The local MOH/designate will work with the school administration to support all other preventative measures (e.g., active health screening, masking recommendations, cohorting) before a recommendation to close a school is made. ○ The local MOH will consult with the Chief Medical Officer of Health (or designate) prior to making a recommendation to temporarily close a school. ● More information on outbreak management in schools can be found at Management of Outbreaks of Communicable Disease in Schools.

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Student Transportation (Including School Buses)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parents and children/students should not be in the pick-up area or enter the bus if they have symptoms of COVID-19.• Bus drivers should be provided with a protective zone, which may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ 2 metre physical distance;○ Physical barrier;○ Mask; or○ Other.• Students should be assigned seats. Students who live in the same household should be seated together.• Masks remain mandatory for all students, teachers, staff members and visitors on school buses and publicly accessible transit, such as municipal buses, taxis and ride-shares. School administrators/authorities must comply with CMOH Order 42-2021 regarding masking requirements on school buses.• Schools/bus companies should develop procedures for student loading, unloading and transfers that support physical distancing of 2 metres between all persons (except household members), when possible and may include:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Children/students start loading from the back seats to the front of bus.○ Where feasible, limit the number of students per bench unless from the same household.○ Students from the same household may share seats.○ Students start unloading from the front seats to the back of bus.○ If there are students from two schools on the same bus, it is recommended to keep students from each school separated by 2 metres (3 rows) if possible.• A child who becomes symptomatic during the bus trip should be provided a mask if they are not already wearing one. The driver should contact the school to make the appropriate arrangements to pick up the child/student (see Responding to Illness above).• School bus cleaning and records:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Choose a disinfectant that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a broad-spectrum virucidal claim OR a virucidal claim against non-enveloped viruses or coronaviruses and use it according to the manufacturer’s instructions. More information is available in the AHS COVID-19 public health recommendations for environmental cleaning of public facilities.
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, window areas, rails, steering wheel, mobile devices and GPS prior to each run. ○ It is recommended that vehicle cleaning logs be kept. ● Students and staff should be discouraged from carpooling unless they are from the same household. If carpooling is necessary, limit the number of people in the vehicle to maintain as much physical distance as possible and ensure all occupants wear masks and practice hand hygiene.
Work Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Work experience is permitted as long as the risk of infection is mitigated for all participants. ● If the work experience placement is in a workplace, the child/student is expected to follow health rules set out by the workplace which should comply with the General Operational Guidance and the sector-specific guidance.
International Students/Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● International travel programs and international education programs in Alberta must follow current public health orders and local restrictions. ● Individuals who have traveled from outside of Canada are provided with specific instructions and requirements at the border. They are to follow the Government of Canada Travel, Testing, Quarantine and Borders instructions, including any requirements for exempt travelers related to attending high-risk environments. ● School administrators/authorities are not expected to be assessing students for following requirements set out by the Federal Quarantine Act. ● Students/families are not required to provide proof of vaccination status for school administrators/authorities. ● Providing school administrators with proof of a negative test result after arrival in Canada is not required to attend school.
Compliance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Concerns with individuals not complying with school protocols should be directed to the school principal, the school authority central office or Alberta Education. ● School administrators and school authorities who have concerns, need specific guidance or have questions about how to apply the measures outlined in the guidance document may contact AHS Environmental Public Health in their zone for assistance. ● Concerns identified by AHS should be discussed with the school administration. Concerns that cannot be resolved through this process should be directed to Alberta Health, who may bring forward to Alberta Education as appropriate.

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Appendix A: Environmental Public Health Contacts

Alberta Health Services

Portal link: <https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/>

ZONE	CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBERS FOR MAIN OFFICE
Calgary Zone	calgaryzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Calgary 403-943-2288
Central Zone	centralzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Red Deer 403-356-6366
Edmonton Zone	edmontonzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Edmonton 780-735-1800
North Zone	northzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Grande Prairie 780-513-7517
South Zone	she.southzoneeph@ahs.ca	Lethbridge 403-388-6689

Indigenous Services Canada – First Nations and Inuit Health Branch

OFFICE	REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS	
	8:00 AM – 4:00 PM	
Edmonton	Environmental Public Health	780-495-4409
Tsuut'ina	Environmental Public Health	403-299-3939

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Appendix B: Management of Symptomatic Individuals and Individuals Tested for COVID-19

Symptoms	COVID-19 Test Result:	Management of Individual:
Symptomatic	Positive	Isolate for a minimum 10 days or until symptoms have improved AND no fever for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.
	Negative	Stay home until symptoms resolve.
	Not tested	<p>Student: If symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath or loss of sense of taste/smell: Isolate for a minimum for 10 days or until symptoms have improved AND afebrile for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.</p> <p>Adult: If symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, loss of taste/smell or runny nose: Isolate for a minimum for 10 days or until symptoms have improved AND afebrile for 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing medications, whichever is longer.</p> <p>Student: If other symptoms (chills, sore throat/painful swallowing, runny nose/congestion, feeling unwell/fatigued, nausea/vomiting/diarrhea, unexplained loss of appetite, muscle/joint aches, headache or conjunctivitis):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ONE symptom: stay home, monitor for 24h. If improves, return when well enough to go (testing not necessary). • TWO symptoms OR ONE symptom that persists or worsens: Stay home until symptom(s) resolve (testing recommended but not required). <p>Adult: If other symptoms, stay home until symptoms resolve.</p>
Asymptomatic	Positive	Isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the collection date of the swab.
	Negative	No isolation required.

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Appendix C: Management of COVID-19 Cases in Schools

Step	Actions
School Notification	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While individuals are not required to share their health information, an individual may choose to notify the school of a positive COVID-19 test result. • School administrators/authorities do not need to contact AHS Public Health to report individual cases.
Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no expectation for school administrators or school authorities to identify and notify possible close contacts, or to send broad notifications to parents/guardians • If communications are sent out, it is important to ensure the confidentiality of an individual's health information. • Do not instruct individuals to quarantine, as this is no longer a legal requirement. If individuals would like more information on what to do if they are notified that they may be a close contact, please visit alberta.ca/isolation.
Reinforcing Staying Home When Sick	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is important to remember that the COVID-19 case is isolating, so the risk of onward transmission from that person has been removed from the setting • Review isolation requirements for the case and/or anyone who is experiencing symptoms. • Isolation requirements can be found at alberta.ca/isolation. • Support students and staff to stay home if sick.
Review Current Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review what measures that are already in place in the school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How frequently does cleaning/disinfection occur? - When is handwashing being promoted? - Has the HVAC system had routine maintenance? - Any other school-specific policy
Consider Additional Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider if measures may be enhanced, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing frequency of cleaning/disinfection - Opening windows/doors for increased ventilation - Promoting more frequent hand hygiene

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Requiring masks for younger grades or while seated in a school setting- Increasing space between students and staff- Reducing mixing between classes of students
Monitor for Additional Illness	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue to monitor students for additional cases (e.g., an individual voluntarily shares they are positive for COVID or they start to experience COVID-19 symptoms while at the school) and/or absenteeism due to illness.

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