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****Details regarding COVID-19 are very situational and evolving. This info will be updated regularly and is subject to change****

UPDATE: June 2nd, 2020

INFECTION CONTROL AND STAFF / STUDENT QUESTIONS

1. At what point, if any, would masks or other personal protective equipment be recommended for staff or students?

- Personal protective equipment such as masks, gloves, and gowns are not normally needed for staff who work in the education sector. It is only recommended for health care workers and those with other non-infectious occupational health exposures.
- Masks for use by children are not encouraged unless advised to do so by a health care provider. In young children, in particular, masks can be irritating, may be worn incorrectly, and can lead to increased touching of the face and eyes.
- Some people may choose to wear [masks](#), which is acceptable. Masks can be useful to contain the droplets from the wearer and may protect others. Homemade masks may be considered an option where personal protection is not required. Masks are not a substitution for staying at home if the person is feeling unwell.

2. Do we follow our regular sick policy or does it need to be updated / more stringent?

In educational settings, children and staff will often have respiratory viruses with symptoms similar to COVID-19. For this reason, all children and staff who are ill with fever or respiratory symptoms should stay home or be sent home if they become ill at school.

3. How can we best prepare our school (staff and students) to ensure we promote a healthy environment for everyone?

- Most importantly, if you are ill, stay at home. If staff start to feel ill while at school, they need to go home. If students feel ill, they should be separated from others and a parent needs to be contacted to pick up the child as soon as possible. Encourage hand hygiene. Thorough and frequent handwashing with plain soap and water is still the single most effective way to reduce the spread of illness.
- When sinks for handwashing are simply not available in close proximity (i.e. if students and staff are participating in activities outside), you may use alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) containing at least 60% alcohol.
- Discuss and model appropriate cough / sneeze etiquette: into the crease of the elbow or into a tissue and then discard the tissue.

4. Are there specific situations where staff or students should not attend school due to underlying health issues or health issues with household contacts?

Staff or students should **NOT** attend school if they are suffering from the following:

- Fever;
- Cough from an unknown ailment or condition;
- Sore throat, aches, pains, and above symptoms;
- Upset stomach, nausea or diarrhea.

Visit the BC Centre for Disease Control for the [covid-19 self assessment test](#)

Staff or students need to assess their fitness to attend school in the following situations:

- Person has only a headache; while this is a symptom of COVID-19, it should not preclude attendance on its own. Person should continue to self-monitor and go home should they experience any further COVID-19 symptoms;
- Person has aches and pains; as above, as a stand-alone symptom this is not a reason to not attend school, continue to self monitor;
- Person's medical professional has provided an opinion regarding their medical condition and the risks of school attendance that should be considered.

There is no specified limitation on a person's activities based on pre-existing health conditions. Staff or students can attend school in the following situations:

- There is an elderly household contact;
- There is an immune-compromised household contact;
- Person or household contact has allergies;
- Person or household contact has asthma;
- Person or household contact has an upcoming surgery;
- Person is pregnant;
- Person works in a group home, long-term care facility, medical office or dental office.

5. What procedures do we follow if there is a test positive case of COVID-19 at the school (either staff or student)?

If there is a positive COVID-19 case in the school population follow the directions of the School Medical Officer / Medical Health Officer. Cases of COVID-19 may not require changes to school schedules. Additional cleaning (as outlined below) can be done in the specific areas known to be related to the case in conjunction with regular cleaning. Follow up and contact tracing will be done by Public Health.

6. Can playground equipment (climbing features, swings, etc.) be used?

If outdoor play equipment is to be available for use by students, increased supervision is needed to ensure the following:

- Children should clean their hands before and after use of the equipment;
- Avoid overcrowding as much as possible.

7. What about questions around COVID-19 from students?

For questions from students about COVID-19 we strongly recommend using information from trustworthy sources such as the BC Centre for Disease Control www.bccdc.ca and Island Health www.islandhealth.ca Some general information for students regarding the virus is available at <http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID19-QA-kids.pdf>

PHYSICAL DISTANCING INFORMATION AND CONTACT SURFACES

See the Ministry of Health and the BC Centre for Disease Control document [COVID-19: Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#)

8. Are there precautions / recommendations around paper being passed between people, e.g. attendance sheets, work books, etc.?

As with other respiratory viruses, there is no evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper or other paper products. As such, there is no need to limit the distribution of books or paper based educational resources to students due to concerns about virus transmission.

9. What about drinking water fountains, should they be open?

Yes, the water fountain should remain open with the following precautionary measures the school can take:

- Addition of an adapter or extension on the fountainhead to prevent direct mouth to tap contact and lessen the risk of possible exposure to users, such as a cone.
- Providing frequent and routine cleaning of the mouthpiece and handles of the fountain throughout the day, especially to the fountains that are highly used.
- Posting signage educating users not to make mouth to fountain head contact and not to make contact with the fountain knob with uncovered skin (i.e. to use sleeves on the handles, or elbow to push button, or best if foot pedal operated).
- Ensure a higher pressure for the water to be released so user's mouths can be further away from the fountainhead.
- Set up a dispenser for disposable paper cone cups;
- A separate water cooler, with disposable cups;
- Flushing the water first before drinking.

10. What about toys and other common school items?

Keep enough toys out to encourage individual play. Items that may encourage group play in close proximity or increase the risk of hand-to-hand contact (e.g. playdough) should be avoided. Try to limit toys and other items to those that can be easily cleaned as per [BCCDC cleaning and disinfecting guidelines](#).

11. What should be considered regarding shop classes, art classes or other hands-on learning environments for older students?

The key requirements are the same for all classroom spaces:

- Maintain physical distancing;
- Encourage proper personal hygiene (frequent handwashing);
- Create class sizes based on available space;
- Increase ventilation as much as possible;
- Cohort or group students together as much as possible to reduce exposures;
- Have dedicated equipment assigned to specific students (tools, art supplies, safety equipment, etc.);
- Shared equipment to be disinfected between students;
- Remove items that cannot be easily cleaned / sanitized.

For more information, please refer to Work Safe BC's guidance document [returning to safe operation \(education\)](#)

12. How does the ban of groups larger than 50 apply to the school setting?

The Provincial Health Officer's Order precluding gatherings is primarily intended to prevent large groups of people unfamiliar with each other from gathering in close quarters with one another at organized events.

13. Would special events such as graduation ceremonies be acceptable if they feature less than 50 people?

All inquiries around special events, such as graduations, must be submitted in writing by the school district or independent school administration to the local Medical Health Officer for consideration. Consideration can be given on a case-by-case basis to determine if the proposal is in accordance with the [Provincial Health Officer's Mass Gatherings Order](#)

14. How do we physically distance from students who are special needs / diverse learners and typically require hands-on care?

In some cases, maintaining physical distancing cannot be achieved due to the hands-on nature of the care being provided. In these cases, precautions can be used to protect both the student and the educator (teacher, education assistant, etc.).

- Do not come to school / work if feeling unwell and continue to self-monitor throughout the day.

- Engage in frequent handwashing;
- Avoid touching your face;
- Sneeze / cough into your arm;
- Ensure frequent cleaning of high touch surfaces;
- The use of masks can be considered to reduce the spread of droplets.
- Schedule / cohort the same EA to be working with the same students;
- Limit the number of EA's working with any one student, also cohorting.

15. How do we encourage physical distancing with children, especially young children?

See some of the many suggestions contained within the Ministry of Health and BC Centre for Disease Control documents for [schools](#), which can include things like going outside more often and staggering snack and lunch times to allow for more spacing between children.

CLEANING AND SANITIZING INFORMATION

See the [Island Health Environmental Cleaning for Public Settings Info Sheet](#)

16. What sanitizers should I use at this time?

Our requirement for environmental surfaces is to use an approved sanitizer (quaternary ammonium called "quats"/bleach/Activated Hydrogen Peroxide) for food contact and common touch surfaces as per instructions by the manufacturer. Regular sanitizers are effective if used according to the manufacturer's label and rated to be effective against viruses. For the different concentrations for environmental surfaces versus food contact surfaces, [see the attached Sanitizer information in Appendix A.](#)

17. What is the name of the accelerated hydrogen peroxide product?

Viper[®], Diversity[®], Virox[®] or other brand using accelerated hydrogen peroxide (AHP) as the active ingredient.

18. Are non-alcohol based hand sanitizers effective against Covid-19?

Current recommendations are for products with a minimum of 60% alcohol. Hand sanitizers that contain Benzalkonium chloride have less reliable activity against the coronavirus family.

19. What is an alternative if alcohol based hand sanitizers are not available?

Use good handwashing techniques with soap if alcohol based hand sanitizer is not available. Non-alcohol based sanitizers are not recommended as they have not been shown to be as effective against coronaviruses as alcohol based hand sanitizers. Other chemicals should not be used to wash your hands. Only products specifically intended for handwashing should be used; do not wash your hands with chlorine bleach or other chemicals.

20. How long does COVID-19 survive on surfaces, like plastics or metal?

We do not yet know how long the virus causing COVID-19 lives on surfaces, but early evidence suggests it can live on objects and surfaces from a few hours to days. Regular cleaning and disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces is very important to help to prevent the transmission of viruses from contaminated objects and surfaces.

- Make sure you are well-stocked with handwashing supplies at all times including soap, clean towels, paper towels, and where appropriate, hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Use space strategically and consolidate cleaning efforts accordingly. Consider where students and staff will be present and focus cleaning efforts on those locations, (as opposed to the entire school). This will help optimize cleaning supplies and focus cleaning efforts.
- Increase how often you clean the premises and any toys or items used; clean and disinfect high-touch surfaces regularly. Empty garbage containers often.
- Clean high-touch electronic devices such as keyboards, tablets, and smartboards with minimum 60% alcohol (i.e., alcohol prep wipes) ensuring to follow the manufacturer's instructions for use regarding contact time.
- For cleaning, use water, household detergents, and common disinfectant products, as these should be sufficient for cleaning and disinfection in an educational setting. Always read and follow the instructions on the packaging for the products that are used.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

21. What are the requirements for International students coming into the country?

Any person coming into the country must follow the requirements of the Canada Border Services Agency and the Government of Canada's [Emergency Order](#) under the Quarantine Act.

SCHOOL MEALS AND FOOD PROGRAMS / ACTIVITIES

22. What are the requirements for cafeteria service?

Follow the restaurant requirements under the Food Premise Regulation, as well as COVID-19 requirements from Work Safe BC's [safe operations for restaurants, cafes and pubs](#)

23. Can our school's community garden still operate?

Yes, provided that physical distancing can be maintained and that proper sanitation and hygiene can be provided. Use sanitizer for common touch areas (e.g. gates, latches, hose taps and nozzles). Do not share tools or else thoroughly sanitize them between users. Ensure thorough handwashing.

24. In what capacity can the school breakfast program resume? What could that look like?

Food is not considered a common vector of COVID-19 but it is the personal contact between food handlers and between food handlers and consumers that is the issue.

While in-class education has been suspended, most school districts have acted quickly to use their resources to ensure students who normally receive meals at school would continue to have them at home. This is being achieved in a number of different ways such as food hampers, bagged lunches, and vouchers depending on the area and the need.

Food handlers are reminded to work only when healthy and follow stringent hand hygiene. Foods are to be individually plated by the food handler (no self-service by students). Handwashing by students prior to eating. Physical distancing imposed during eating periods. More information on food and the COVID-19 virus can be found on the [BCCDC covid-19 and food page](#) or the Government of Canada's site [Food Safety and Covid-19](#)

25. Can the hot lunch fundraising programs start up again? (e.g. PAC run hot lunch days or take out from local restaurants verses volunteer prepared meals)

Handwashing is required for food handlers and strongly encouraged for students. Ensure that PAC lunch booths offer sufficient space for allowance for physical distancing. Prepackaged takeout meals are strongly recommended over foods requiring handling (e.g. portioning out foods). Students should be reminded never to share foods. Include volunteers in reminders about sick worker policy and hand hygiene.

CONTACT US

FOR HEALTH PROTECTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES:

Contact your local Environmental Health office

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-protection-environmental-services-locations>

FOR PUBLIC HEALTH NURSING:

Contact your local Public Health Nursing office

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/our-locations/health-unit-locations>

FOR HEALTHY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE:

Contact your local Healthy School Lead

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/children-youth/school-age-children-5-19-years-old/healthy-schools-initiative>

FOR THE SCHOOL MEDICAL OFFICER / MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER:

Contact your Local SMO or MHO

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/about-us/medical-health-officers>

REFERENCES

BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL – COVID-19; CHILD CARE AND SCHOOLS

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools>

BC MINISTRY OF HEALTH / BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL – COVID-19: PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR K-12 SCHOOL SETTINGS

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-k-12-schools.pdf>

PRINTABLE HANDWASHING SIGN

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/sites/default/files/2018-05/hand-washing-reminder-sign.pdf>

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/sites/default/files/2018-05/hand-washing-control-germs-sign.pdf>

BC CENTRE FOR DISEASE CONTROL – COVID-19; FOOD SAFETY

<http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/prevention-risks/food-safety>

ISLAND HEALTH

COVID-19 Topic Page -- <https://www.islandhealth.ca/learn-about-health/covid-19>

Environmental Cleaning for Public Settings --

<https://www.islandhealth.ca/sites/default/files/COVID-19/documents/fact-sheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf>

Covid-19 Guidance for the hotel sector

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-hotel-sector.pdf>

COVID-19: Joint Provincial Program Framework for Emergency Response Centres

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19-pho-guidance-joint-povincial-program-framework-for-ercs.pdf>