

## **COVID-19 School Exposure Notifications**

As announced by Dr. Bonnie Henry earlier this week, the PHO and BCCDC are finalizing an updated process for COVID-19 school exposure notifications and data. We anticipate this new process will be communicated out early next week along with additional public data and we will share this information as soon as it is available.

## **Updated Daily Health Check Poster**

The [Daily Health Check poster](#) has been updated to reflect new federal regulations regarding international travel. A [print version](#) of the poster is also available. The updated poster is being translated into multiple languages, which will be posted to the [COVID-19 Safe Schools site](#) in the next few days.

## **COVID-19 Safety Measures in Schools – Q&A**

### *School Closures*

- 1. What process should school districts and independent schools follow regarding COVID-19 related school closures?**
  - In some cases, a school may need to temporarily move all students from in-class to remote learning in response to COVID-19 cases within the school community. The closure may be directed by the local medical health officer to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 (e.g., outbreak), or it may be based on operational considerations (e.g., inability to backfill multiple staff who are self-isolating as confirmed cases or close contacts).
  - School district and independent school administrators should always consult with their medical officer and K-12 Rapid Response Team prior to making the decision to close the school in response to a COVID-19 exposure.
  - School districts and independent school authorities must also immediately report any school closures to the Ministry of Education by emailing [educ.covid@gov.bc.ca](mailto:educ.covid@gov.bc.ca).

### *Proof of Vaccination*

- 2. How do the proof of vaccination requirements in the provincial Gathering and Events Order apply to K-12 schools?**
  - The Office of the Provincial Health Officer has confirmed that all K-12 school activities are excluded from proof of vaccination requirements. This includes any programs for children and youth offered by a school.
    - This applies to all educational and extracurricular activities (e.g., school sports, special interest clubs), programming for children and youth (e.g., school meals, early learning/pre-K) and school-led events (e.g., open houses, parent-teacher interviews, science fairs, performances/recitals, school sports, etc.).
  - This exclusion applies to any person involved in or attending a K-12 school activity, including all students, staff, volunteers and parents/caregivers. The PHO is expected to amend the order to clarify that volunteers and parents/caregivers are exempted when part of the K-12 school activity.

- Schools should continue to follow all other requirements outlined in the:
  - [Provincial Gathering and Events Order](#) (the Order) (e.g., event capacity limits of 50 people or 50% room occupancy, whichever is greater, including support personnel, participants and spectators) and relevant regional public health orders; and
  - [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12](#), including the sections on School Gatherings and Events (p.9) and Visitor Access/Community Use (p.14)

**3. How do the proof of vaccination requirements apply to field trips?**

- The Order excludes all K-12 school activities from proof of vaccination requirements regardless of location. This includes when on school field trips. However, venue operators may have different operational practices in place, particularly in situations where other members of the public may be present at the same time (e.g., museums, fitness facilities or restaurants).
- School staff are strongly encouraged to communicate with venue operators in advance of any proposed field trips, to confirm the venue’s specific policies and procedures, and to not plan field trips to venues where students and staff may be asked to provide proof of vaccination.

**4. Do the proof of vaccination requirements apply to board or PAC meetings?**

- No, board meetings (including those attended by members of the public) and PAC meetings are excluded from proof of vaccination requirements.

**5. How do the proof of vaccination requirements apply to community rentals of school facilities? What is the responsibility of the school/district?**

- Community members/organizations renting school facilities must follow proof of vaccination requirements, which are based on the type of, and age group participating in the activity. For example, indoor adult sport or exercise activities require proof of vaccination, whereas programs for children and youth under the age of 22 (e.g., an after-school program run by a community organization) do not.
- The person/organizer renting a school facility is responsible for verifying proof of vaccination when required, not the school or school district.

**6. How do the proof of vaccination requirements apply to professional development activities for school staff?**

- Proof of vaccination requirements do not apply to staff professional development and in-service activities organized by the school or school district and held on or off of school/district property.
- For staff professional development activities hosted offsite, whether organized by the school/district or by a third party (e.g. conferences, external training programs, etc), school/district staff should contact the venue operator and event/program organizer (if applicable) for information on whether they require proof of vaccination for entry.

***Symptoms of Illness and Return to School***

**7. Can people come to school if they have mild symptoms?**

- All students, staff and other adults are expected to complete a daily health check prior to entering the school and to follow the instructions provided based on their specific symptoms.
  - Parents/caregivers and students can use the [K-12 Health Check](#) app.
  - Staff and other adults can refer to BCCDC’s [“When to get tested for COVID-19”](#)
  - Staff, students and parents/caregivers can also use the BCCDC online [Self-Assessment Tool](#) or call 8-1-1.
- Students, staff, or other adults should stay at home when sick, as this is one of the most important ways to reduce the introduction to and the spread of COVID-19 in schools.
- See the *Staying Home, Self-Isolation and Symptoms* section (p.17) of the [Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12](#) for more information.

- 8. If a student becomes sick while at school, can they remain in the classroom (while maintaining physical distance from others) until they can be picked up?**
- Students who develop symptoms of illness at school should be provided with a separate space outside of the classroom where they can wait comfortably for their parent/caregiver to pick them up. Ideally this would be a separate room such as a first aid room or empty office but, if space is limited, could also be in a low traffic hallway or other area of the school (e.g., where a barrier is present, such as a cubicle) where the student can be made comfortable and can maintain physical distance from others.
  - Younger children must be supervised when separated. Supervising staff should wear a non-medical mask and face shield if they are unable to maintain physical distance, avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, and practice diligent hand hygiene.
  - See the *Protocol if a Student/Staff Develops Symptoms of Illness at School* section (p.7) in the [COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff](#) for more information.
- 9. If a student or staff member is asymptomatic but someone in their household has tested positive for COVID-19, can the asymptomatic student/staff member attend school/work?**
- Close contacts of a confirmed case who are asymptomatic and fully vaccinated (have received the full series of doses of an approved COVID-19 vaccine at least two weeks prior) may be permitted by public health to continue to attend school/work while self-monitoring for symptoms.
  - While school and district administrators should not require students and staff to disclose their vaccination status, they can share the following information from [BCCDC](#):
    - *Living in a household with a person who has COVID-19 means you and all of the other people who live in that house are **close contacts** and need to self-monitor for [symptoms consistent with COVID-19](#) for 14 days after being exposed. You and all others who live in the household with someone who has COVID-19 may also need to self-isolate. Public Health will help you decide based on your vaccination status, the dates you were vaccinated, and whether you have had COVID-19 in the past. They will use this information to guide you on which steps you need to take to prevent the spread of COVID-19.*
    - *If another person in your household tests positive for COVID-19, this may extend the amount of time that you will need self-monitor and self-isolate. Visit our [How Long Should I Self-Isolate](#) page to learn more about the right isolation period for you and your household members.*
  - Administrators should encourage the staff member to stay home while they wait for direction from public health, and to call 8-1-1 or their local health authority if they have any questions.

### **School Gatherings and Events**

- 10. Are schools allowed to hold in-person school assemblies and other types of gatherings and events?**
- Yes, in-person school gatherings and events (including inter-school events) can occur in line with those permitted as per relevant local, regional, provincial, and federal public health recommendations and Orders.
  - Organizers should apply a trauma-informed lens to their planning, including consideration of student and staff comfort levels, spreading people out as much as possible to prevent involuntarily physical contact between attendees, and gradual transitions to larger gatherings (e.g., starting with virtual or smaller in-person options, shorter in-person sessions, etc.).