
TO: CUPE local presidents representing school board workers

FROM: OSBCU/CSCSO

DATE: September 1, 2020

RE: *Summary of Operational Guidance: COVID-19 Management in Schools*

On August 26, 2020, the government of Ontario released a document entitled *Operational guidance: COVID-19 management in schools*. The document sets out how school boards, in collaboration with the local public health unit(s) (“PHU”) and the Ministry of Education (“MOE”), will:

- manage a scenario where a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 inside or outside of the school setting
- manage a scenario where a student or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19
- inform the public health unit of suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19
- partially or fully close a school in the case of an outbreak and how to reopen
- permit students and staff to return to school after testing positive

The document can be accessed on the MOE webpage at <https://www.ontario.ca/page/operational-guidance-covid-19-management-schools>

The following are key points from the guidance protocols. Although some of these points are guidelines (“should”), we recommend taking them as obligations (“must”) to avoid unnecessary exposure to our members.

Outbreaks and Information

- The local PHU is responsible for declaring outbreaks and providing direction to boards on the measures to be implemented. The PHU will assist boards in determining whether to partially/fully close a school.
- An outbreak need not be declared over for the PHU to reopen a school or reintegrate a cohort(s).
- An outbreak at a school is defined as:
 - two or more lab-confirmed cases in a student and/or staff member within 14 days; **and**
 - where there is a reasonable link to transmission in a school activity (classroom, bus, before/after school care, etc.).

NOTE: In other words, if the PHU determines that two students/staff members acquired COVID-19 from community transmission, an outbreak may not necessarily be declared.

- Schools are responsible for reporting to the PHU and the MOE of a probable/confirmed case in a school through their daily reporting tool. Absence/absenteeism concerns must also be reported to the PHU.
- School boards and schools are required to post information on their webpages where a positive case has been identified. Information provided to school communities will not identify the student/staff member that has received a positive COVID-19 test.

Ill Students/Staff

- All sites must have an isolation room equipped with a PPE kit in case a student/staff member becomes ill at school. A staff member providing care should maintain distancing and wear surgical/mask and eye protection.
NOTE: OSBCU recommends gloves and gowns in addition to a mask and face shield as minimum PPE.
- Students/staff who become ill:
 - are strongly recommended to get tested
 - are to remain away from school awaiting test results
 - should follow the guidance of a health care provider and or the PHU

Positive test

- If a student/staff member tests positive:
 - the individual should isolate for 14 days. No further testing is required.
NOTE: OSBCU recommends that an individual returning from 14-day isolation should not be symptomatic.
 - the PHU will notify the student/staff member and the school. If the PHU determines a transmission risk to others in the school, students and staff will be assessed to determine if high-risk exposure occurred. High-risk exposure will generally be considered staff and students in a cohort.
NOTE: The Public Health Agency of Canada has defined high, medium and low-risk exposure to COVID-19. See: Table 1 at <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/health-professionals/interim-guidance-cases-contacts.html>
 - all students/staff members determined by the PHU to be at high risk of exposure will be directed to isolate and recommended to be tested (voluntary testing) within their isolation period. A negative result does not change the isolation requirements.
- Individuals who have symptoms of COVID-19, **but who test negative**, should not return to school until at least 24 hours after symptoms have resolved. Barriers to return to school should be avoided (i.e. medical notes, proof of negative tests).
- Students/staff are not obligated to inform the school if a person who shares a household with the student/staff member tests positive, although it is strongly recommended. If the school **is notified**, the student should report to the isolation room, picked up from school and isolate for 14 days. The PHU will manage contact tracing in the school, depending on the circumstances.

NOTE: Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act, the employer must notify the Joint Health and Safety Committee and the Union, within four (4) days, of a worker who develops an occupational illness or files a claim of occupational illness with the WSIB. If a worker develops COVID-19 as a result of workplace exposure, it is an occupational illness.

The WSIB Form 6 must be filled out if a worker develops COVID-19 from the workplace – <https://www.wsib.ca/en/workers-eform6>

If a worker suspects they have been exposed to COVID-19 but have not developed symptoms, it is recommended that they fill out the WSIB Exposure Incident Form
https://www.wsib.ca/sites/default/files/2019-02/3959a_10_12_fs.pdf

Special Education

- The following sets out guidance in circumstances where a student with special education needs in a congregate/integrated class conflict with COVID-19 protocols.
 - School boards and schools will need to:
 - consider additional planning and transition time
 - support attendance options where adapted timetables and remote learning are a challenge
 - work with regulated health and social service professionals and paraprofessionals to develop local COVID-19 protocols
 - Teachers will meet parent/guardian and spec ed staff to discuss possible changes to accommodations in the IEP.
- NOTE:** OSBCU expects EA's and DECE's to be involved in these discussions.

Appendices

The operational guidelines include appendices with resources for school boards. They include:

- A letter to parent/guardian on:
 - Common symptoms and atypical signs of COVID-19
 - Screening children
 - Reporting children's absences
 - How to protect a family from exposure
- School board requirements in preparation for September 2020. Boards are required to:
 - Identify a board COVID-19 lead and key contacts in the local PHU
 - Ensure schools have an isolation area
 - Ensure documents are prepared for contact tracing (cohort lists and seating charts for classes and buses, cohort list for before/after school programs)
 - Create and communicate a system-wide protocol for school visitors

OSBCU recommends that CUPE local executives and members of the joint health and safety committee review the government's outbreak management protocols along with any similar school board protocols. Potential gaps and conflicting information should be identified and resolved in the best interest of worker safety.