This guidance is intended to help education providers and administrators develop policies and procedures when face-to-face instruction is safe to resume. This sheet also contains tips for staff, students, and parents/caregivers to help protect against exposure to COVID-19.

**Protecting Yourself and Others**

- It is important to follow guidance from the Public Health Agency of Canada, provincial public health agencies, and your school board.

- Staff and students with symptoms, or who have been in contact with someone suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19, or who have recently travelled outside of the country must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days. Follow the Public Health Agency of Canada’s steps for self-assessment: [https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)

- Develop protocols for isolating sick students and staff.

- Develop written procedures of all the measures being taken to reduce the risk of exposure and make sure all staff, parents/caregivers, and students are aware of them. It is important to maintain regular communication with students and parents/caregivers to make sure students that are sick or have been in contact with someone that may have COVID-19 are not sent to school.

- Wash your hands with soap and water frequently or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer when soap and water is not available.

- Cover your mouth when coughing and sneeze into your flexed elbow or sleeve. Dispose any used tissue right away and wash hands.

- Disinfect surfaces frequently with disinfectant or a bleach solution using disposable gloves.

- Encourage individual activities to help maintain physical distance and to avoid use of shared items.

- Remove shared books, toys and other items that are difficult to sanitize.

- Staff and students should be encouraged to report any health and safety concerns immediately to the appropriate individuals.

- Develop a business continuity plan to minimize disruptions, including increased staff absenteeism, and procedures for an outbreak, regardless of community transmission rates.

- Use non-medical masks when physical distancing or other measures are not possible. These masks have limitations, and improper mask use and disposal can increase the risk of infection. Anyone with symptoms are to stay home.

- Promote mental health services that are available to staff and students.
**Personal Hygiene**

- Develop policies and make sure there are enough resources for hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Train all staff and students on COVID-19 prevention, signs and symptoms, and proper procedures to follow including hand hygiene.
- Include infection prevention as part of daily lessons and activities, making sure that content is age appropriate.
- Post reminder signs at entrances and throughout buildings about hand and respiratory hygiene.
- Provide tissues and plastic lined garbage bins for their disposal.
- Regularly wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water:
  - at the start and end of the school day
  - before eating or drinking
  - before preparing food
  - after cleaning up meal and snack times
  - after touching shared items
  - after using the washroom, and
  - after handling garbage.
- Have students and staff wash their hands when entering the building.
- Hand wash stations or hand sanitizer should be close and accessible to each classroom.
- Discourage food and drink sharing.
- Designate a clean and disinfected area for storing food items brought from home.

**Facility Hygiene**

- Develop a strict cleaning schedule and track when cleaning has taken place, especially for areas and surfaces frequently used and touched.
- Clean and disinfect washrooms frequently and stock with soap and paper towels.
- Clean and disinfect building, classrooms, and frequently touched surfaces, such as computers, teaching and learning aids, tables, chairs, door and window handles, light switches, etc.
  - Use approved hard surface disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) if available.
  - If household or commercial disinfectant cleaning products are not available, hard surfaces can be disinfected using a mixture of 5 mL of bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) and 250 mL of water.
  - If liquids can be withstood, disinfect high-touch electronic devices (touch screens, keyboards, tablets, smartboards) with alcohol or disinfectant wipes.
  - Only use toys or equipment that can be cleaned and disinfected.
- Use disposable cleaning cloths and gloves.
- Increase fresh air flow and ventilation in the building and classrooms when the climate allows.
- Replace garbage bins with no-touch receptacles or remove lids that require contact to open.
- Safely dispose of garbage at least once a day.
- Provide custodians with adequate supplies, training on cleaning protocols, and personal protective equipment.
Screening

- Establish procedures for staff and students that show up to school sick or become sick during the day. Make sure they are safely sent home as soon as possible while minimizing risk of exposure to others.
- Should someone develop a cough, fever, or other symptoms, isolate them from others in the facility. Provide non-medical masks to the worker and child (but only if the child is comfortable wearing it and can remove it themselves without assistance) if available. Contact their parent/caregiver to take them home immediately and to seek appropriate medical attention. In an emergency, students may need to be sent directly to the hospital. Staff should maintain a physical distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from the sick student where possible.
- If a staff member or student is confirmed to have COVID-19, contact public health immediately for guidance on next steps.
- Monitor absentee rates and notify public health if there are increased rates of staff and students away due to illness.

Physical Distancing

- Where possible, stagger the beginning and end of the school day, class schedules, breaks and lunch.
- Try to maintain 2 metres (6 feet) of physical distancing wherever possible.
- Separate student desks as far apart as possible (1-2 metres).
- Limit the number of people allowed in the same room.
- Consider adding multiple break areas, including outdoors, for staff.
- Explore how classrooms can be arranged to promote physical distancing, and consider using libraries, gyms, outdoors and other locations as additional classroom space.
- Consider how students will use or travel through shared spaces, such as hallways and washrooms. Mark one-way routes where appropriate to maintain physical distancing.
- Use floor markings, signage, and other visual cues to assist with physical distancing measures.
- Spend more time outdoors if there is enough space. Disinfect or avoid climbing structures, shared swings, slides, and other equipment.
- Modify or cancel classes where students would normally be in close contact or be required to share supplies or equipment.
- Cancel assemblies, sports events, or other large gatherings, and use online/virtual methods where possible.
- Restrict non-essential visitors from entering buildings, including parents/caregivers and contractors.
- Allow administrative staff to work from home whenever possible.
- Teach students about physical distancing and avoiding unnecessary touching. Maintain adequate supervision, especially of younger students.
- Determine if and how many additional staff are required to maintain physical distancing without compromising safety and learning objectives.
- Consider blended teaching methods using both distance learning and face-to-face instruction where appropriate.
- Evaluate the safety of online/virtual learning platforms.
- Prioritize face-to-face instruction for students that are most in need.

Transportation

- Evaluate the mode of transportation for all students and staff to ensure they can get to and from school safely.
- Where possible, parents/caregivers should drop off students at school or have them walk (if safe and within close distance) to limit the number of people needing to use public transportation and school buses.
- Parents/caregivers should remain in their vehicles during drop-offs and pickups.
Education Providers: Grades K – 12

- Maintain 2 metres (6 feet) of separation between passengers when using public transportation and school buses where possible. Students from the same household may sit together if space is limited. Use of non-medical masks may also be requested by your local public transportation provider.
- Consider assigning or marking seats where people can sit to maintain physical distancing.
- Consider installing physical barriers (e.g., plexiglass) in areas on the bus where maintaining 2 metres (6 feet) of separation is not possible.
- Consider having passengers use hand sanitizer when entering the bus.
- Control how passengers enter and exit to maintain physical distancing.
- Limit the number of people allowed on a bus.
- Stagger start and end times to avoid congestion.
- Designate multiple pickup and drop off areas at the school.
- Have staff greet students as they arrive where needed.
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of buses is required, especially between groups of riders, and should follow a strict schedule.

General Recommendations

- In the event of an emergency, follow established emergency response procedures.
- Perform regular inspections and hazard assessments to identify potential ways staff and students may be exposed to COVID-19.
- Evaluate new COVID-19 preventative measures before using them to make sure new health and safety risks are not created.
- Make sure there are enough staff to support new measures.
- When putting actions into place, use the hierarchy of controls. Evaluate their effectiveness and impact on the health and well-being of staff and students.
  1. Elimination – removing the hazard, such as physical distancing measures.
  2. Engineering controls – isolating the hazard, such as installing barriers.
  3. Administrative controls – establishing rules and guidelines, such as cleaning procedures.
  4. Personal protective equipment – used when other controls do not offer enough protection, such as non-medical masks. Other controls must also be in place.
- Regularly communicate COVID-19 news and measures to staff, students and parents/caregivers to help manage stress and anxiety.
- Special considerations are required for students and staff at higher risk (e.g., underlying medical conditions, immunocompromised, aged 65 and over, etc.).

Coping with Social Isolation, Microaggression or Stigma

- When helping others, encourage them to talk to someone trained in mental health first aid, or someone else they trust about what they are experiencing.
- For an employee, ask them to contact their supervisor, employer, or employee assistance service, if available.
- Contact your local public health or community resources that offer mental health services.
- Check out organizations online:
  - Canadian Psychological Association https://cpa.ca/psychologyfactsheets/
  - Kids Help Phone https://kidshelpphone.ca/get-info/were-here-for-you-during-covid-19-novel-coronavirus/
If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a Crisis Centre in your area. [https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/](https://suicideprevention.ca/need-help/)

It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all employees, including access to an Employee Assistance Program (EAP).

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the Public Health Agency of Canada [https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus](https://www.canada.ca/coronavirus)

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization’s specific needs.