

Deputy Minister's Bulletin

– Independent Schools

Ministry of Education



COVID-19 Update

October 29, 2021

Reminder: COVID-19 Guidance Documents

With the school year well underway, schools are encouraged to continue to use the provincial COVID-19 guidance documents, including regularly monitoring and reviewing communicable disease plans with joint health and safety committees, or responding to when a case of COVID-19 impacts a school.

[Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#)

- Outlines the principles and requirements for maintaining safe learning environments, including what prevention measures should be in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Includes what measures may be included within regional recommendations during times of elevated risk, like:
 - Limiting gatherings and events, and
 - Reconfiguring room arrangements or incorporating more activities that reduce face-to-face contact.
- Outlines optional strategies schools can choose to implement as part of a trauma-informed approach, including:
 - Staggering recess/snack, lunch and class transition times, and
 - Implementing strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times, and
 - Holding virtual or smaller in-person assemblies.

[School Communicable Disease Checklist](#)

- Supports schools to assess their communicable disease plan with the Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings.

[COVID-19 Protocols for School & District Administrators and Staff: Management of Illness and Exposures at School](#)

- Provides K-12 school and district administrators with information on the processes, roles and responsibilities involved in managing COVID-19 cases that are impacting the school community.
- Includes key messages schools can use to provide information to their school communities when there may have been a COVID-19 exposure (including when it has not yet been confirmed by public health).

COVID-19 Safety Measures in Schools – Q&A

1. The [PHO Gatherings & Events Order](#) (updated October 25, 2021) has been revised to allow 100% capacity for events and activities where proof of vaccination status is required. Does this apply to school events, programs or activities?
 - **No.** Educational activities, including extracurricular events and gatherings, and school-led before, during or after-school programs continue to be excluded from the provincial Order.
 - Schools should not check proof of vaccination, and should continue to implement the following capacity guidelines for extracurricular gatherings and events (including concerts, festivals, and inter-school sporting events):
 - Indoor activities can have 50 spectators or 50% seated capacity, whichever is greater. For example, if the venue has a normal seated capacity of 500 people, 250 spectators can attend.
 - Outdoor activities can have 5,000 spectators or 50% seated capacity, whichever is greater.
 - The capacity limit total includes everyone in attendance – students, staff, volunteers, and spectators, except for necessary facility staff (e.g., custodians).

- Schools should continue to follow any applicable regional public health orders or recommendations in place.
 - [Northern Health](#) has introduced public health orders, including for youth sports events within schools, covering most of the NH region to manage COVID-19.
 - [Interior Health](#) has regional restrictions in place, including recommendations for schools, to stop the spread of COVID-19.

2. Under the revised PHO Gatherings & Events Order, adults leading, supervising or assisting with a program for children or youth must have received two doses of vaccine. Does this apply to school events, programs or activities?

1. **No.** Educational activities, including extracurricular events and gatherings, and school-led before, during or after-school programs continue to be excluded from the provincial Order. This includes extracurricular school sports.
2. Adults leading, supervising or assisting with school activities do not need to be vaccinated.

We continue to closely monitor updates to Provincial Health Officer Orders and will provide updates as needed.