



Gulf Islands School District 64 Communicable Disease Prevention Plan 2022-2023

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Gulf Islands School District 64

Communicable Disease Prevention Plan

2022-2023

Introduction

The *Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 School Settings* have been updated on August 25, 2022 to reflect the advice of public health experts and to continue to build on the experiences of previous years. The *Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 School Settings* was developed by the Ministry of Education and Child Care in collaboration with the BC Centre for Disease Control, Indigenous rights holders and education partners.

Key Principles

The following principles will continue to guide SD64 schools for the 2022-2023 school year to reduce the risk of transmission of any communicable disease (including COVID-19):

- Communicable disease prevention measures continue to be aligned with public health guidance.
- The Provincial Health Officer or local Medical Health Officers may issue temporary provincial, regional or local recommendations or orders of additional prevention measures during times of increased communicable disease risk.
- Consultation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples will continue to address the unique educational and learning needs of their communities.
- Inclusive and trauma-informed practice, with a focus on mental health and wellness, will continue to be utilized to support school community.
- Steps are taken to reduce the risk to workers from communicable disease as per WorkSafe BC.

Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures

Infection prevention and exposure control measures (also called communicable disease measures or health and safety measures) help create safe environments by reducing the spread of communicable diseases, including COVID-19. SD64 schools continue to provide supportive environments for communicable disease prevention by implementing the following:

- Robust illness policies for students and staff.
- Reinforcement and adoption of effective personal practices (such as hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette).
- Various environmental measures (such as enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices, ensuring HVAC systems are operating properly).

Supportive Schools Environments

To support students in practicing personal preventative measures, SD64 will continue to engage in the following:

- Have staff model these behaviours.
- Share reliable information, including information from the BC Centre for Disease Control and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, with families, parents and caregivers via email distribution and district website postings.
- Promote safety measures in the schools through the use of visual aids like floor markings and signage.



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Positive and inclusive approaches will be utilized to engage students in personal prevention practices aligned with existing professional practices to address behaviour. Approaches should not exclude students from participating in school or potentially result in stigma. When planning school activities and interacting with other staff and students (respecting others' personal space), trauma-informed lens will be utilized. Schools will continue to apply a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (gatherings and events) and interacting with other staff and students, including considerations around respecting others personal space.

Students and staff may choose to wear masks, face shields or other personal protective equipment in schools and these choices must be respected.

Vaccines

Vaccines are important tools to protect against many serious communicable diseases. Vaccination protects serious illness due to Covid-19 and is the most effective way to reduce the impact of Covid-19 in our communities. To get the most effective protection against serious cases of Covid-19, it is important to get all recommended vaccine doses.

SD64 will work with the local health authority in vaccination efforts to share evidence-based information (such BCCDC and ImmunizeBC) and promote opportunities to be vaccinated in partnership with public health and local Medical Health Officers.

Space Arrangement

Schools will return to classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches, though should still consider implementing strategies to help create space between people and to support students and staff using a trauma-informed approach.

Staff and student should be encouraged to respect other people's personal space (the distance from which a person feels comfortable being next to another person).

WorkSafeBC – Communicable Disease Prevention

Sd64 will follow WorkSafeBC *Communicable Disease Prevention Guidance* and provide communication, training, and orientation to ensure the health and safety of our staff.

Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities and/or Receiving Health Services

All implementation of health and safety measures will promote the inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities. For some students (or families) with severe immune compromised or medical complexity, in-class instruction may not be suitable and as such schools should follow regular practices for those needing alternative learning arrangements due to immune compromised or medical complexity to ensure access to learning and supports.

When working with a student requires being in close proximity, the standard risk assessment methods should be followed to determine what PPE is needed for general communicable disease prevention in accordance with routine practices. Additional personal protective equipment is not required beyond that used in their regular course of work (eg. gloves for toileting).



Students are not required to wear a mask or face covering when receiving services, though may continue to be based on their or their parent/caregiver's personal choice. Non-medical masks will be available to those who may have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one.

Student Transportation

The following strategies will continue to be supported for student bus transportation:

- Buses to be cleaned and disinfected according to SD64 cleaning and disinfecting procedures (high touch areas to be cleaned and disinfected at least once every 24-hour period); clean and disinfect any surface that is visibly dirty.
- Bus drivers and students should be encouraged to practice hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- Bus drivers and students in K-12 may choose to wear masks or face coverings when they are on the bus as this is their personal choice which should be respected and supported.
- Daily health checks for symptoms of illness (common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infections respiratory disease) are to be conducted prior to leaving the house. Students are to remain home if experiencing any symptoms.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Regular cleaning and disinfecting are essential to prevent the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. SD64 will continue to adhere to the following cleaning protocols:

- General cleaning of the sites and cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces, at least once in a 24-hour period.
- Cleaning and disinfecting any surface that is visibly dirty.
- Focusing on spaces that have been utilized by staff or students; procedures such as securing occupied spaces or adding sign-in sheets posted next to room entrances should be in place to help custodial staff focus their efforts on spaces that have been used.

Frequently touched surfaces (may change from day to day based on utilization) include the following:

- Items used by larger numbers of students and staff, including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, and toilet handles.
- Shared equipment (e.g. computer keyboards and tablets, glassware and testing equipment for science labs, kitchen equipment for culinary programs, sewing machines and sewing equipment for home economic programs, PE/sports equipment, music equipment, etc.).
- Frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, play-dough, etc.) can be used. Carpets and rugs (e.g. in Kindergarten and StrongStart classes) can also be used.
- When cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids, the following procedures in conjunction with SD64 procedures will be utilized:
 - Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
 - Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Follow regular health and safety procedures and regularly used PPE (such as gloves, protective or woven sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids (e.g. toileting, spitting, biting).

Visitor Access/Community Use

Schools are responsible for ensuring that visitors are aware of communicable disease protocols and requirements, and have completed a daily health check, prior to entering the school. All visitors are to follow applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.



Health Awareness

Schools should ensure that everyone entering the site is aware and routinely reminded of their responsibility to practice health awareness, including that they should not come to school if they are sick through communications (eg. emails/letters to parents and staff), orientation activities (eg. meetings, videos), and other reminders (eg. signage on doors).

Illness Practices

When students and staff are experiencing illness at home, they should stay home and follow the BCCDC guidance outlined in [*When to Get Tested for Covid-19*](#) and the [*BC Self-Assessment Tool*](#). Students and staff and other adults should follow public health guidance, BCCDC guidance, and/or the recommendation of their health care provider when they are sick.

When students or staff become ill while at school, the following protocols are as follows:

- Establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work to be sent home as soon as possible. Some students or staff may not be picked up immediately. As such, schools will have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and are separated from others. Supervision should be provided for younger children.
- Non-medical masks will continue to be available for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one (for both the person who is sick and for those who may be assisting them).
- Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the person's body fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (such as their desk in the classroom, the bathroom stall they used) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others. Cleaning/disinfecting the entire room the person was in is not required in these circumstances.
- Students and staff who are ill are requested to stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities.

Hand Hygiene

Hand washing rigorously with soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness (anti-bacterial soap is not needed for COVID-19). Students, staff and visitors should be encouraged to practice frequent hand hygiene as outline in BCCDC's [*Hand Hygiene Poster*](#).

Respiratory Etiquette

To minimize the spread of illness, students and staff should practice the following protocols:

- Cough and sneeze into their elbow, sleeve, or tissue.
- Discard tissue (if used).
- Perform hand hygiene immediately.
- Refrain from touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

Masks and Face Coverings

The decision to wear a mask or face covering is a personal choice for staff, students and visitors. Some may choose to continue wearing a mask because they are more comfortable wearing a mask or because they or someone in their family may be at higher risk and want to take extra precautions. A person's choice should be supported and respected.

- Promote the school environment as supportive for wearing masks through mask-specific messaging at assemblies and in announcements, signs, and written communications. Include that some people wear masks to reduce their risk of communicable disease. It is important to be kind and respectful of other's choices.



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- Continue school-wide efforts to create safe and inclusive learning environments, free from discrimination, bullying and harassment. Set, communicate and consistently reinforce clear expectations that any bullying or other disrespectful behaviour or conduct related to personal mask use choice is unacceptable. Address behaviour in line with protocols and practices for addressing disrespectful behaviors (eg. Codes of Conduct).

Schools should continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one or who become ill at school. Masks are one layer of protection used to prevent the spread of communicable disease. To be most effective, wearing a mask should be combined with other important protective measures as outlined in this document.

General Ventilation and Air Circulation

SD64's heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are designed, operated, and maintained as per standards and specifications for ongoing comfort for students and staff. All HVAC systems across the district are fitted with MERV13 filters.

Emergency and Evacuation Drills

Schools will continue to practice various emergency procedures involving all occupants in the building, including 6 school fire evacuation drills required annually by BC Fire Code 2.8.3., earthquake, and lockdown drills. Schools will review their fire safety plans on a minimum annual basis, as per the BC Fire Code, to "ensure it takes account of the changes in use and other characteristics of the building" (such as pandemic-related protocols). Emergency procedures may require modification to adhere to communicable disease plans (e.g. designating additional muster locations to reduce crowding where required, making efforts to minimize involuntary physical contact between participants, etc.). Schools may also need to consult with their local medical health officer for guidance on current public health Orders, which may affect site specific emergency and evacuation procedures. In the event of an actual emergency, procedure modification may be suspended to ensure a timely, efficient and safe response.

Curriculum, Programs and Activities

Schools should continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices (like cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

Extracurricular Activities

Intra- and inter-school extracurricular activities and special interest clubs can occur in alignment with the guidelines in this document and requirements of applicable local, regional, and provincial public health recommendations.

Communications and Protecting Personal Privacy

Medical Health Officers play the lead role in determining if, when and how to communicate information regarding increased communicable disease activity within a school. Schools will continue to routinely communicate to their communities the need to follow any recommended public health measures, practice health awareness, and to stay home when sick. School will continue to exercise caution in providing communicable disease notifications beyond when they are recommended by public health to protect personal privacy and to support accuracy.



Managing Communicable Disease Activity at School

Functional Closures

A functional closure of a school is the temporary closure of a school determined by a school district due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high number of staff or certain employees away who are required for a school to function and the inability to temporarily replace them. School districts will notify the Medical Health Officer and the Ministry of Education and Child Care when they are considering or implementing a functional closure.

Public Health Closure

A public health closure is the temporary closing of a school ordered by a Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of a communicable disease.