



## **WCPS Staff COVID-19 Handbook**

**Created March 14, 2020**

### **Preamble**

On March 13 2020, Alberta Education distributed a document entitled “Alberta Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs: 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)”. This document was used to create this handbook to **provide information and guidance to all WCPS staff** to support ongoing efforts to maintain safe and effective school operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

**At this time it is essential all WCPS staff have access to and understand this document to ensure a consistent and highly effective approach and response.**

Given the fluid situation surrounding this Pandemic, as additional measures are initiated and directed from Alberta Education and the Alberta Chief Medical Officer of Health, this document will be updated (additions will be in a different text colour).

### **General Information**

Symptoms associated with COVID-19 are similar to many common respiratory illnesses that may be circulating through schools/child care settings. The two most important ways to prevent and control respiratory viruses, including COVID-19, in schools and child care settings are:

- For students/children and staff who are ill with respiratory illness symptoms **(fever, cough, fatigue, and/or muscle aches)** to stay home from school/child care, and
- The consistent practice of good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene.

**IMPORTANT: Students/staff with a confirmed case of COVID-19 must receive clearance from public health officials before returning to school; students/staff with a non COVID-19 or unknown respiratory illness should not return to school until 14 days after symptom onset (ie. a student or staff noticed symptom onset on March 10. They would be required to self-isolate for 14 days until March 24).**

## **Enforce Strict Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

Hand hygiene with plain soap and warm water is preferred in schools as the mechanical action of hand washing is effective at removing visible soil as well as microbes. In instances where hand washing sinks are not available, supervised use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol may be considered. If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol based hand sanitizers may not be effective at eliminating respiratory viruses.

Students/children and adults in the child care setting should clean their hands:

- before leaving home and on arrival at school
- after using the toilet
- after breaks and sporting activities
- before food preparation
- before eating any food, including snacks
- after contact with saliva or nasal secretions
- after diapering a child
- before using shared materials such as arts and craft supplies
- before leaving school and on arrival at home

**Respiratory etiquette in schools** includes covering the mouth and nose during coughing or sneezing with a tissue or a flexed elbow and disposing of used tissues in a plastic-lined waste container, followed by hand hygiene.

There should be sufficient hand washing stations (sinks and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer) to enable students/children to easily clean their hands as required. Staff should increase monitoring of hand washing supplies and refill as necessary. Schools and child care settings should also ensure that:

- Sufficient tissue supplies and no-touch, plastic-lined waste receptacles are placed to support respiratory etiquette recommendations.
- Young children are supervised and assisted in hand hygiene at teacher/caregiver discretion, to ensure hand washing is done thoroughly.
- Administration and staff are reminded that Material Safety Data Sheets and product labels provide additional information regarding placement, storage and warnings associated with alcohol based hand sanitizers.

## **Maintain Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures**

Regular cleaning and disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces (e.g. door handles, water fountain push buttons) will help prevent the transmission of viruses. This can be done using existing school setting cleaning and disinfection protocols, as long as the disinfectant product is effective against coronaviruses, particularly the COVID-19 virus (see “Disinfection” below).

**Disinfection** is most effective on a clean surface; surfaces should be cleaned first, as necessary, before applying the disinfectant.

**Cleaning** is the physical removal of visible soiling (e.g., dust, soil, blood, mucus). Cleaning removes, rather than kills, viruses and bacteria. It is done with water, detergents, and steady friction from a cleaning cloth. Cleaning for COVID-19 virus is the same as for other common viruses. In general, cleaning should be done whenever surfaces are visibly soiled.

Disinfection is the killing of viruses and bacteria. A disinfectant is only applied to objects; never on the human body. Most schools/child care settings will have existing policies to disinfect high-touch surfaces at least once per day; if not, these should be developed. Consider more frequent disinfection whenever respiratory illnesses are circulating in the school/child care setting. As well, additional disinfection should occur in any settings occupied by a student/child who is symptomatic and at risk of COVID-19 (see “Managing a child with possible COVID-19” below).

Consider cleaning and disinfecting practices in the following specific circumstances encountered in schools/child care settings:

- **Musical instruments:** Students/children should have their own mouthpieces for instruments. Mouthpieces should be cleaned and disinfected as per standard practices recommended for the instrument.
- **Toys:** Schools/child care settings should have toys that are easily cleaned and disinfected (e.g. avoid plush toys). Consider increasing frequency of cleaning and disinfection, especially if symptomatic students/children have been playing with the toys. Immediately remove toys that have been contaminated until they have been cleaned and disinfected.
- **Water fountains:** The mouthpieces of drinking fountains are not a major source of virus transmission and require only regular cleaning according to manufacturer recommendations (Pacific Institute, 2017).
  - Water fountain knobs and push buttons should be considered high-touch surfaces, and regularly cleaned and disinfected. Consideration can be given to having students/children fill water bottles rather than having them drink directly from the mouthpiece of the fountain.

School administrators are encouraged to review existing activities and practices within their settings to help determine where and when enhancements or increased cleaning frequencies may be needed.

### **Reinforce Food and Container Sharing Policies**

It will be important to reinforce “no food sharing” policies in school/child care settings. Though in general, these policies are put in place in an effort to reduce potential exposures to allergens, the practice of not sharing food in the school/child care setting will support the efforts of reducing virus transmission between students/children. Students and children should also be supported not to share utensils, dishes, and water bottles/drink containers.

### **Keep Parents/Caregivers Informed About Measures at the School**

Parents/caregivers will be a major source of comfort and reassurance to their children. It will be important for the schools to keep parents/caregivers informed of what they are doing to protect students/children including how they are preventing the spread of respiratory infections.

If there are cases of COVID-19 identified within school settings, the Zone Medical Officers of Health will work directly with the school and Division administration to provide follow-up recommendations and messaging for staff, parents/caregivers and students. It is important for the school to ensure that they collaborate with the Zone Medical Officers of Health prior to sending any messaging to ensure accuracy.

### **Manage Students and Staff with Respiratory Symptoms**

Parents/guardians of students/children and staff should be informed that by the direction of Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health there is zero tolerance for children or staff with any respiratory symptoms attending schools or school division facilities across Alberta. This includes Wolf Creek Public Schools.

Teachers and school staff are urged to closely monitor their classrooms, and if any student is having respiratory symptoms such as cough or symptoms of a mild cold, or flu-like symptoms the steps below should be followed. The same steps should be followed if a staff member begins to experience respiratory symptoms.

- If a student, child or staff develops respiratory symptoms while at school, they should be removed from the school environment.
- Schools and school facilities promptly separate the student/child or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g. fever, cough, sore throat, shortness of breath, fatigue, headache,

muscle aches, and including symptoms that may seem like a mild cold) in an area separate from others, with adequate supervision until they can go home.

- To help prevent transmission, the most important steps are to reinforce strict respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene practices and to **have the ill student/child or staff stay two meters away from others.** If possible, the student should be placed in a separate room from other students/children with a closed door. Any rooms they have been in while symptomatic should be cleaned and disinfected before others enter them.
- Schools must notify parents/guardians if their child begins to experience respiratory symptoms while at school and arrange for immediate pick up.
- Students and staff must remain home for 14 days, regardless of changes in symptoms over that time. If symptoms have improved, parents must contact the school to update the school upon the end of the 14 day period.
- If symptoms persist past the 14-day period, please consult with your school before your child returns.

Since younger children and children with special needs may not always be able or willing to identify or disclose symptoms, they should be closely monitored by staff for symptoms.

### **Students or Staff Returning from Travel Outside of Canada**

Parents/guardians of students/children and staff are informed that by the direction of Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health that any student or staff member who returns from travel outside of Canada **must contact the school to notify of their return,** and as directed by Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health, **self-isolate for 14-days before returning to school or school division facilities.**

During self-isolation, monitor for the development of any possible symptoms. If possible COVID-19 symptoms do develop, please refer to Alberta Health at <https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>, [Alberta Health's COVID-19 Self Assessment Online](#) tool or call Alberta Health Link at 881.

If students or staff are tested for COVID-19, those who test negative will be advised individually about return to school and work.

### **Important Considerations:**

- If your family is planning travel outside of Canada for March Break, and that travel includes a WCPS student, that student will have to self-isolate for 14-days starting upon your return home. The student WILL NOT be able to return to school until that 14-day self-isolation expires.

- If parents or family members have travelled outside of Canada, but your child or a related staff member has not, Alberta's Chief Medical Officer of Health advised that the child and staff member can still attend school or work. If any symptoms develop they will then be subject to the same 14-day period away from school and school division facilities.

### **Support Individuals/Families Who Are Self-Monitoring or Self-Isolating**

Some students/children may be asked to self-isolate (stay at home) for 14 days if they are at higher risk of developing the disease (for example, due to close contact with a case). Others at lower risk of developing the disease may be asked to self-monitor daily for 14 days for symptoms, and alert public health officials if they do develop symptoms. Individuals who are self-monitoring are allowed to attend and work in school and participate in regular activities. The website COVID-19 Info for Albertans at:

<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx> contains up to date information 'For Schools' on which categories of students have been asked to self-isolate.

Asymptomatic contacts that are self-isolating do not pose a risk to others and no additional messaging to parents, students or staff is required in these instances.

If students/children or staff have been advised by public health officials to self-monitor for symptoms or self-isolate at home, the school community should make efforts to support families so that:

- Sick leave policies are in place and school attendance is flexible. It is important to discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives (CDC Interim Guidance for Child Care Programs and K-12 Schools, 2020).
- Families are treated with respect, fairness and compassion with a focus on dignity and privacy protection.
- Steps are taken to reduce the potential for stigma and discrimination (e.g., through outreach, information sharing and school/board level education) (CDC Interim Guidance for Travel-associated or Community Settings, 2020).
- If students are self-isolating at home and they are well enough to participate in homework, measures are in place to provide meaningful homework. This will support students so they do not fall behind in their studies and they can maintain a sense of meaning/belonging.
- Children who are unwell may need extensions of deadlines, alternative measures to reduce burdens or exemptions in some cases.
- When students/children/staff have completed a 14-day period of self-isolation without developing COVID-19, they can return to full activities in their school/child care setting and do not need special monitoring or other procedures.

- Individuals who are self-monitoring are allowed to attend and work in school and participate in regular activities.
- Disclosure of self-monitoring status is voluntary. If families disclose that students, children or staff are self-monitoring for symptoms, ensure measures are in place to recognize symptoms while in school/child care and to separate sick students, children or staff from others if symptoms develop.
- Students/children who have had a COVID-19 infection will receive individualized guidance from public health officials as to when they are non-infectious and can return to school/child care setting. They will not require special monitoring or procedures beyond that point. Administrators should not require a doctor's note to return to the school/child care setting.

### **COVID-19 Leave Entitlements for WCPS Staff**

Please view the link below for a detailed document outlining and clarifying a variety of leave scenarios:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bfZ7TCm3AdUkwf0kS2FOSNL-zrOdQTtmOYB\\_SbuC5J8/edit?ts=5e6d3db1](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1bfZ7TCm3AdUkwf0kS2FOSNL-zrOdQTtmOYB_SbuC5J8/edit?ts=5e6d3db1)

### **Mass Gatherings**

Until further notice, the following events should be cancelled:

- Events with **more than 50 attendees** that involve international participants, critical infrastructure staff, seniors, or other high-risk populations, such as immune-compromised.
- Large events with **more than 250 attendees**, including sporting events, school assemblies and community events.

School administrators will be taking steps to ensure that no more than 250 people are in the same room at any given time.

For the latest updates on Mass Gathering restrictions, refer to the tab "Public health restrictions on mass gatherings" at COVID-19 Info for Albertans.

<https://www.alberta.ca/assets/documents/covid-19-mass-gatherings.pdf>

### **Proper Hygiene and Precautions**

A new virus such as the COVID-19 can create anxiety and be difficult for students/children to understand, especially if someone in their school or family is sick, or they see or hear troubling messages on the radio, internet or television. It is normal for students/children to feel worried or

nervous and have questions. All staff in schools and parents at home can support children by doing the following:

Reassure students/children about their personal safety and health. Telling students/children that it is okay to be concerned is comforting. Reassure them they are safe and there are many things they can do to stay healthy:

- **Hand washing:** Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds, or use an alcohol based hand sanitizer, especially after coughing or sneezing.
- **Cough/sneeze etiquette:** Cough and sneeze into arm or tissue.
- **Stay home when sick:** Students/children should tell parents if they are not feeling well, and together, make a plan to stay home from school.
- **Keep clean:** Keep hands away from face and mouth.
- **Stay healthy:** Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, keeping physically active, getting enough sleep.

As referenced in previous communication, additional sanitation measures have been taken across all schools and division facilities. These measures include:

- Our custodians have increased their cleaning and sanitizing practices at all schools and sites in Wolf Creek Public Schools.
- Custodians are sanitizing all high-touch areas in our schools to help prevent the spread of germs.
- Custodians will wipe down/sanitize door hardware, handrails, drinking fountains, telephones in common areas and other high-touch areas as they move throughout their schools.

**NOTE: Enhanced sanitizing is planned over the March Break.**

### **Bank of Teaching Resources: COVID-19**

A bank of teacher/classroom resources including lesson plans, videos and resources to support students has been developed. See the link below:

[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MFPq7uL\\_ukYhRn8OdLBixZtoHhkl6d71QFywCpNR\\_BI/edit?ts=5e6d3de7#](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1MFPq7uL_ukYhRn8OdLBixZtoHhkl6d71QFywCpNR_BI/edit?ts=5e6d3de7#)

### **Further Information**

Up-to-date information on the evolving situation of COVID-19 in Alberta and Canada is available on the following websites:



Alberta Health (COVID-19 Info for Albertans)

<https://www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx>

Alberta Health Services (novel coronavirus (COVID-19))

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/topics/Page16944.aspx>

Public Health Agency of Canada (Covid-19: Being Prepared)

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/being-prepared.html>

Alberta Health COVID-19 Self Assessment Online Tool

[https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx?utm\\_source=google&utm\\_medium=sem&utm\\_campaign=Covid19&utm\\_term=self-assessment&utm\\_content=GoA-v1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIl9\\_Q5eua6AIVIBh9Ch3YfAHIEAAYASAAEgJaEPD\\_BwE](https://myhealth.alberta.ca/Journey/COVID-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx?utm_source=google&utm_medium=sem&utm_campaign=Covid19&utm_term=self-assessment&utm_content=GoA-v1&gclid=EAlaIQobChMIl9_Q5eua6AIVIBh9Ch3YfAHIEAAYASAAEgJaEPD_BwE)