

November 6, 2020

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister of Education

Subject: Updates to Operational Guidance for Schools

Thank you for the ongoing work you and your teams are doing to ensure health and safety measures are being followed in your schools.

The purpose of this memo is to provide an update on changes to the Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools document.

On August 26th, 2020, the government released the Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools document. This guide was developed in consultation with public health experts, including Ontario's Chief Medical Officer of Health, and aims to help schools identify and isolate COVID-19 cases, reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools, and prevent and minimize outbreaks.

To continue supporting the safe and healthy operation of schools across the province during this unprecedented time, I am pleased to share the revised [Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools document](#).

In consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, along with other health and education partners, we have made updates to the guidance document based on the latest public health advice and to provide additional clarity in specific sections.

Key changes in this document include:

- That local PHUs have responsibility in determining when an individual or cohorts are dismissed, when schools are closed and when individuals or cohorts can return to school. However, in some instances, local PHUs may give discretion to principals to dismiss individuals or cohorts for self-isolation while awaiting results of local public health investigation.
- Added guidance for boards on reporting COVID-19 absences in schools using the online reporting tool and outlining that boards need to report daily. Additional clarity is also provided stating that boards must report suspected cases to the local public health unit to support case management and contact tracing.
- Revised guidance around screening practices to clarify that screening prior to arrival at the school is necessary, and to encourage the use of the provincial screening tool.
- Added guidance on self-isolation periods to align with Ministry of Health guidance on testing and clearance and updated guidance in the [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool](#).
- Updated language to clarify that if a child develops symptoms and their self-screening indicates that they should stay home, but their siblings do not have symptoms, the siblings do not need to isolate until the child with symptoms tests positive for COVID-19.
- Addition of guidance around continuity of learning and expectations that boards are prepared to pivot to remote learning when needed. This includes clarifying that boards are to support

the transition to remote learning for siblings of students who have a confirmed case of COVID-19.

- Revised language around testing stating that individuals should only consult a health care provider as needed. Previous language indicated individuals should seek testing even if showing mild symptoms.
- Clarified that medical notes and proof of a negative test are not required for an individual to return to school.

To support consistency, where necessary, guidance documents have also been updated for licensed child care programs.

We encourage you to communicate this information to your school communities, including staff, parents/families and students.

We will continue to review and update guidance based on public health advice, and keep you informed of notable updates. We welcome your questions and feedback as we work together to support the safe operation of schools in Ontario.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister

Attachment

- c:
- Executive Director, Association des conseils scolaires des écoles publiques de l'ontario (ACÉPO)
 - Executive Director, Association franco-ontarienne des conseils scolaires catholiques (AFOCSC)
 - Executive Director, Ontario Catholic School Trustees' Association (OCSTA)
 - Executive Director, Ontario Public School Boards' Association (OPSBA)
 - Executive Director, Council of Ontario Directors of Education (CODE)
 - Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer, Association des enseignantes et des enseignants franco-ontariens (AEFO)
 - General Secretary, Ontario English Catholic Teachers' Association (OECTA)
 - General Secretary, Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)
 - General Secretary, Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation (OSSTF)
 - Chair, Ontario Council of Educational Workers (OCEW)
 - Chair, Education Workers' Alliance of Ontario (EWAO)
 - Co-ordinator, Canadian Union of Public Employees – Ontario (CUPE-ON)