

# School Public Health Nurses and COVID-19: Role Clarification Resource

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# 1 Introduction

As part of the Government of Ontario’s plan to prioritize the health and safety of students and staff, funds were committed to hire up to 625 additional school-focused nurses in public health units (PHUs) to provide rapid-response support to school boards and schools in facilitating public health and preventative measures relating to the COVID-19 pandemic.

School-focused nurses can contribute to the following activities in support of school boards and schools:

- Providing support in the development and implementation of COVID-19 health and safety plans;
- Providing sector specific support for infection prevention and control (IPAC), surveillance, screening and testing;
- Case and contact management, outbreak management; and,
- Supporting communication and engagement with local school communities, as well as the broader health care sector.

While the priority focus is on the COVID-19 response, these additional nurses may support the fulfilment of board of health requirements to improve the health of school-aged children and youth as per the School Health Program Standard and related guidelines and protocols under the *Ontario Public Health Standards: Requirements for Programs, Services and Accountability* (OPHS). The additional FTEs may also support licensed child care centres, including before and after school programs situated in schools, home child care premises and other priority settings, as identified by the PHU through its local population health assessment and in accordance with the OPHS.

PHUs may use the funds provided for this initiative to hire nurses who are currently registered with the College of Nurses of Ontario, which may include a combination of Registered Nurses (RNs), Registered Practical Nurses (RPNs), and Registered Nurses in the Extended Class (RN-ECs), depending on local need. However, PHUs are encouraged to consider recruitment of RNs to the extent possible, and it is anticipated that a significant portion of these will be Public Health Nurses (PHNs), as defined by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, 1990* and associated regulations. As such, this resource focuses on the comprehensive role of the School PHN.

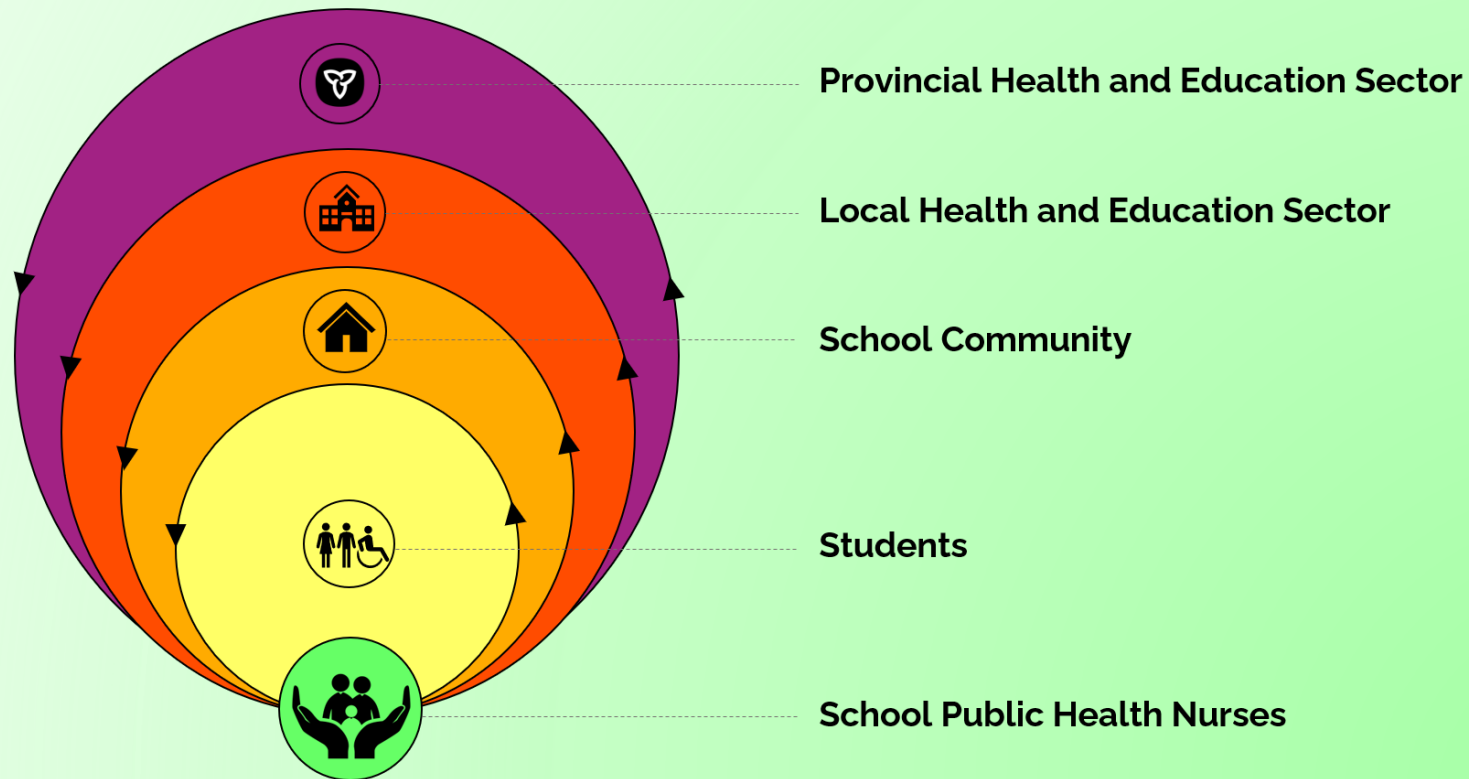
## 1.1 Purpose

This resource has been developed by a working group of the Education Sector – Preparedness and Outbreak Planning Table (ES-POP), with representation from local and provincial public health, school system administrators, the Ministry of Education, and the Ministry of Health to help clarify the role and scope of supports that the School PHNs provide. This resource is intended to be used in conjunction with provincial policy guidance, such as the Ministry of Health’s [School Health Guideline, 2018](#) (or as current) and the Ministry of Education’s [Foundations for a Healthy School](#) resource, as well as locally-adopted tools and processes for public health and education sector program planning (e.g., the Joint Consortium for School Health’s [Healthy School Planner](#)).

## 2 School Public Health Nurse Socio-Ecological Model

Consistent with the public health and education sector frameworks outlined in the [School Health Guideline, 2018](#) (or as current), the School PHNs contribute to a Socio-Ecological Model of Health, which illustrates the foundational impact of public health nursing on students, the school community and the local and provincial health sectors.

The **School Public Health Nurse Socio-Ecological Model** considers the complex interplay between students, the school community, the local and provincial health and education sectors, and school-focused nurses. School Public Health Nurses at the foundation of the model demonstrates their role in supporting intervention and policy implementation to improve the health and well-being of school-aged children and youth.





## School Public Health Nurse

School Public Health Nurses (School PHNs) partner with students and the broader school community, including staff and families, to build healthy school communities that promote student well-being and support learning. School PHNs will be supported by local Public Health Units, local community partners and the Ministries of Health and Education to understand and identify priority health issues, and collaboratively develop, implement, and evaluate action plans to address these issues. In the context of COVID-19, School PHNs interact with all levels of the education sector to support positive health outcomes. For example:



### Students

Ontario's goal of developing and implementing programs and services that contribute to achieving optimal health of school-aged children and youth continues to be of primary importance.

School PHNs will positively impact students broadly through:

- ✓ Implementation of the School Health Standard.
- ✓ COVID-19 health and safety (i.e., (IPAC)).
- ✓ Support for modified school programs and classes.
- ✓ Transparent and clear communication.



### School Community

The School Community, inclusive of Educators, Principals and Families, are integral to student well-being and learning, and specifically, communication regarding COVID-19 health and safety.

School PHNs will positively impact school communities through:

- ✓ Transparent communication regarding COVID-19 protocols, tools and learning resources.
- ✓ Facilitating connections with local community health partners.



### Local Health and Education Sector

Public Health Units and Boards of Education are collaboratively responsible for implementation of key legislative and regulatory frameworks and guidelines, including COVID-19 health and safety.

School PHNs will positively impact local health and education sectors through:

- ✓ Understanding and monitoring of COVID-19 guidelines.
- ✓ Supporting the development and implementation of school COVID -19 health, safety and prevention plans, and facilitating rapid responses.



### Provincial Health & Education Sector

The Ministries of Health and Education are collaboratively responsible for the development of key legislative and regulatory frameworks and guidelines, including COVID-19 health and safety.

School PHNs will positively impact provincial health and education sectors through:

- ✓ Reporting on key indicators.
- ✓ Recommendations for policy and program improvements, especially with regards to identified health inequities in school communities.

### 3 Summary of Nursing Supports for School Communities in Ontario

There are a variety of nursing roles supporting school communities in Ontario. The following chart provides a high-level description of the roles of these different nurses and describes how the nurses may interact with schools, families and individuals. This is **not** a comprehensive list of nursing roles or activities; however, it can help to clarify and distinguish the role of the School PHNs both generally and in relation to COVID-19, from that of other nurses supporting the school community. This chart may be adapted to represent more specific roles of nurses in a community, which may vary based on local context.

Position	School Public Health Nurse <sup>1</sup> (PHN)	School Public Health Nurse (PHN) – COVID-19	Mental Health and Addictions Nurse (MHAN)	School Health Support Services (SHSS)	Primary Care Nurse (PCN)
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Public Health Unit (PHU)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Public Health Unit (PHU)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><a href="#">Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN)</a></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Primary Care Providers</li> <li>Interprofessional Primary Care Teams (e.g., NP-Led Clinics, Family Health Teams, Aboriginal Health Centres)</li> <li>Ontario Health Teams (OHT)</li> </ul>
Focus	School Community	School Community	Individual Student	Individual Student	Individual Student
Role <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts assessments and identifies priority health topics<sup>3</sup> and populations in school communities</li> <li>Collaboratively develops and implements evidence-informed action plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helps develop and support the implementation of school (including before and after school programs) COVID-19 health, safety and prevention plans</li> <li>Builds staff capacity (e.g., knowledge, skill-building) to implement COVID-19 measures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports students with mental health and addiction (MHA) needs, and their families</li> <li>Assesses the MHA needs of students referred to them, and creates and implements individual, short-term support plans</li> </ul>	<p><b>Care Coordinator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Receives referrals from schools</li> <li>Completes assessments of student needs</li> <li>Determines appropriate care plan for nursing support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts health assessments with individuals seeking primary care support</li> <li>Supports development of care plan and provides nursing interventions and follow-up</li> <li>Provides health education</li> </ul>

Position	School Public Health Nurse <sup>1</sup> (PHN)	School Public Health Nurse (PHN) – COVID-19	Mental Health and Addictions Nurse (MHAN)	School Health Support Services (SHSS)	Primary Care Nurse (PCN)
	<p>to promote healthy school communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supports school boards and schools with health-related curricula and health needs in schools. Support may include assistance with the development, implementation, and/or evaluation of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Evidence</li> <li>Resources</li> <li>Curricula</li> <li>Policies</li> <li>Programs</li> <li>Training</li> <li>Facilitation</li> <li>Other activities in schools (including before and after school programs situated in schools)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Addresses health inequities within school communities</li> <li>Provides Grade 7/8 immunizations</li> <li>May provide situational supports to students (e.g., brief</li> </ul>	<p>(e.g., IPAC or other prevention and preparedness measures)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists with modifying school programs (e.g., physical education, music) in the context of COVID-19</li> <li>Acts as school’s key public health contact for IPAC support, guidance, surveillance, screening and management of a <a href="#">COVID-19 case or outbreak within school</a></li> <li>Supports communication with families and broader school community about <a href="#">COVID-19 protocols</a></li> <li>Supports mental health and well-being of school community by providing resources and connecting with community supports</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>May provide brief supportive services (e.g., MHA counselling) for students</li> <li>Liaises with school-based mental health professionals, primary care, specialists, and/or community mental health and addictions service providers to support transition to ongoing or additional MHA care who would provide ongoing therapy</li> <li>Supports student transition from hospital to school (as applicable)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assists with treatment plans and access to community support services</li> </ul> <p><b>Nurse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provides support to students requiring nursing care in school (e.g., wound care, tube feeding, medication administration, suctioning, catheterization)</li> <li>Liaises with Care Coordinator, and student’s primary care or specialist providers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducts screening and assessments, and provides nursing interventions, to promote health and prevent illness, injury and further health complications in primary care patients</li> <li>Provides childhood immunizations</li> </ul>

Position	School Public Health Nurse <sup>1</sup> (PHN)	School Public Health Nurse (PHN) – COVID-19	Mental Health and Addictions Nurse (MHAN)	School Health Support Services (SHSS)	Primary Care Nurse (PCN)
	assessment, intervention and referral)				
<b>Mode of Service Provision</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Person</li> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Telephone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Person</li> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Telephone</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Person</li> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Telephone</li> </ul>	<p><b>Care Coordinator</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Person</li> <li>• Email</li> <li>• Video</li> <li>• Phone</li> </ul> <p><b>Nurse</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In-Person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Specific to primary care provider offices.</li> </ul>

<sup>1</sup> PHN and PHN COVID-19 may be the same or different nurses depending on PHU. Refer to sections 4 and 5 below.

<sup>2</sup> This is not a comprehensive list of nursing activities. Please contact your local PHU, LHIN, or OHT to discuss supports available to the school community.

<sup>3</sup> Topics may include: concussions and injury prevention, healthy eating behaviours and food safety, healthy sexuality, immunization, infectious disease prevention, life promotion and suicide risk and prevention, mental health promotion, oral health, physical activity and sedentary behaviour, road and off-road safety, substance use and harm reduction, ultraviolet (UV) exposure, violence and bullying, and visual health.



## 4 Detailed Role of the School Public Health Nurse: COVID-19 Response

School Public Health Nurses partner with the entire school community – students, staff, and families - to build healthy school communities that promote student well-being and support learning. PHNs work with the school community, including before and after school programs situated inside schools, to understand and identify priority health issues, and collaboratively develop, implement, and evaluate action plans to address these issues. Action plans can include:

1. Curriculum, teaching and learning
2. Classroom and school leadership
3. Student engagement
4. Social and physical environments
5. Home, school, and community partnerships

School PHNs do not focus on addressing illness in individuals; instead, they address health issues that are broad, impact the school population, and promote health and prevent disease and injury. School PHNs also work to address structural inequities and implement targeted programs and services that aim to mitigate the negative impacts, and leverage the positive impacts, of the social determinants of health.

The safe reopening of schools during the COVID-19 pandemic is a priority health issue for all schools. School PHNs are a key point of contact for schools that need support from public health services. There is diversity in how PHUs provide COVID-19 support to schools and communities across the province, depending on how health units are organized and on the local COVID-19 context.

Below are some examples of the ways in which School PHNs can support school communities related to COVID-19. This is **not** a comprehensive list. There is diversity between health units in terms of exactly what services and supports are provided, based on local context. Schools and school boards should contact their local [PHU\(s\)](#) to discuss specific supports available.

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse: COVID-19 Response can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
Taking steps to prevent cases of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support with completing <a href="#">Public Health Ontario's (PHO) School Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) Checklist</a>, along with other <a href="#">PHO scientific and technical resources</a></li> <li>Help identify steps that can be taken to reduce risk of COVID-19 infection and transmission</li> <li>Help develop and support the implementation of school COVID - 19 health, safety and prevention plans</li> <li>Liaise with before and after school programs situated within schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Walk through PHO's IPAC Checklist periodically or as needed to monitor ongoing efforts and to address new/evolving challenges related to prevention and preparedness measures in the school and school community</li> <li>Suggest times and places for hand sanitizer use (e.g., prior to eating)</li> <li>Consult on cohorting (e.g., designating specific areas for individual classes to have recess)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaging school board administrators / supervisory officers and Health and Safety representatives in completing an IPAC assessment and following up on concerns</li> <li>Working with PHUs to disseminate COVID-19 information</li> <li>Facilitating the implementation of Board reopening plans</li> <li>Engaging the school community and public health in addressing areas of concern that may impact the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce school's risk for having COVID-19 cases</li> </ul>
Modifying existing programs in the context of COVID-19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support implementation of curriculum, programs, and other school community events within the parameters of health and safety protocols</li> <li>Provide information and guidance on resources to assist in modifying practices. For instance, provincial guidance documents such as:</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the development or modification of programs related to nutrition, physical education, music, etc.</li> <li>Discuss safe practices at lunch time, snack time, and recess</li> <li>Help plan for special occasions and events</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identifying potential concerns</li> <li>Engaging the school community in seeking alternate solutions to meet program and safety needs</li> <li>Seeking out relevant provincial guidance documents</li> <li>Procuring fiscal resources to support program modifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to safely offer critical programming, with the goal of achieving optimal health of school-aged children and youth</li> </ul>

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse: COVID-19 Response can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <a href="#">Guide to reopening Ontario's schools</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">COVID-19 Guidance: School Outbreak Management</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Operational guidance: COVID-19 management in schools</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak - Child Care Re-Opening</a></li> <li>▪ <a href="#">Before and After School Programs: Kindergarten – Grade 6</a></li> </ul>			
<p>Building staff capacity related to COVID-19, public health measures, and health and safety protocols</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide professional development, website, social media, video links, and resource materials to educators and staff about the rationale for public health recommendations and how staff and students can effectively follow the recommendations</li> </ul>	<p>Provide information and implementation advice related to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Physical distancing</li> <li>• Redesigning or modifying spaces to enable physical distancing</li> <li>• Environmental cleaning</li> <li>• Health screening</li> <li>• Hand hygiene</li> <li>• Correct use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)</li> <li>• Non-medical face-coverings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating staff availability to participate in educational opportunities</li> <li>• Enabling the use of various communication mechanisms within the school community</li> <li>• Collaborating with health and safety representatives and union leaders to engage staff and sustain educational efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide educators and staff the information they need to implement health and safety protocols in schools</li> <li>• Reduce the spread of COVID-19</li> </ul>

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse: COVID-19 Response can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
Communicating with families and school communities about COVID-19 and health and safety protocols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with schools' parent engagement strategies</li> <li>Provide education and resources to help families understand new health protocols in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Offer a virtual 'town hall' or education session for families</li> <li>Recommend website and video links</li> <li>Create /and/or adapt information materials for families (e.g., incorporating plain language principals, use of visuals, ensuring translation)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting the use of school community communication channels (virtual platforms, group email addresses, etc.) to reach the specified target audience</li> <li>Encouraging consultation with school community in developing solutions, and actively participating in communication</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage families and provide information to help them understand health and safety protocols (e.g., screening, masking, cohorting)</li> </ul>
Supporting with case and contact management or outbreaks in a school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure staff have the necessary contact information for families</li> <li>Provide direction on how to proceed and/or connect with others at the PHU who will provide directions on how to proceed (e.g., declaring an outbreak, environmental cleaning, limiting certain activities, sending cohorts home)</li> <li>Assist families to overcome barriers to accessing testing and essential items while in isolation</li> <li>Support timely collection of information on affected cohorts to support case and contact management (e.g., collecting class attendance lists, bus lists)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide contact information for the health department, PHU, Telehealth, COVID-19 assessment centre for testing</li> <li>Problem-solve with families, refer to community resources</li> <li>Be available by phone to answer questions</li> <li>Provide guidance to links for school websites and/or information</li> <li>Prepare materials to send home to families</li> <li>Conduct a virtual 'town hall'</li> <li>Be the 'go-to' person to for all COVID-related information and needs (and connect with others)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensuring there is a designated person who can act as the point person for the school to liaise with local public health authorities</li> <li>Developing a school COVID-19 response committee</li> <li>Ensuring timely access to cohort and attendance records that are up to date and in a format that is easily transferable to the local PHU</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure schools respond efficiently and effectively when there is a case and/or outbreak of COVID-19 so that the spread is contained</li> </ul>

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse: COVID-19 Response can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Assist with communications to families that are factual and reduce fear</li> <li>Be a key contact for providing sector specific support for IPAC, surveillance, screening and dealing with COVID-19 case and contact management or outbreak in schools</li> </ul>	<p>as needed) or provide information on key contacts</p>		
<p>Supporting the mental health and wellbeing of the school community (in conjunction with the school board Mental Health Leader)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tailor messages for students and families to address existing fear and anxiety</li> <li>Provide resources to promote mental health and wellbeing</li> <li>Identify methods to create an environment that promotes mental health and well-being while adhering to health and safety protocols (e.g., maintain sense of connectedness and belonging, leverage student / staff strengths, recognition of the difficulties being faced, foster resilience)</li> <li>Connect individuals to school-based mental health supports and community supports, if required (e.g., make needed referrals)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information and/or links related to children’s mental health for school board and/or school websites</li> <li>In conjunction with the principal, support processes to assess and understand current state of mental well-being in the school community</li> <li>Gather and share evidence with the principal regarding strategies for supporting mental wellbeing in school communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Creating a safe and open environment where students and staff feel safe and supported</li> <li>Implementing components of the school board’s Mental Health Strategy and action plan</li> <li>Ensuring educators, students, and families are provided with information about accessing school-based mental health services for students</li> <li>Supporting the safe implementation of campaigns/initiatives to reduce stigma associated with mental illness</li> <li>Ensuring policies and school culture support staff in taking time off when ill</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on the mental health and well-being of the school community</li> <li>Reduce stigma, and associated issues such as bullying, that may arise in school settings</li> </ul>

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse: COVID-19 Response can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Liaising with school board staff focused on mental health, public health, and others to address matters that are or may impact the school community</li> </ul>	

## 5 Detailed Role of the School Public Health Nurse: School Health (General)

While the priority focus of the 625 new school-focused nurses is on the COVID-19 response, these additional nurses may also support the fulfilment of board of health requirements to improve the health of school-aged children and youth per the School Health Program Standard and related guidelines and protocols under the Ontario Public Health Standards. Examples of public health issues that could be a priority for schools include: equity and inclusion; concussions and injury prevention; healthy eating behaviours and food safety; healthy sexuality; immunization; infectious disease prevention; life promotion, suicide risk and prevention; mental health and wellbeing promotion; oral health; physical activity and sedentary behaviour; road and off-road safety; substance use and harm reduction; UV exposure; violence and bullying; and visual health.

This comprehensive approach to school health is supported by evidence and has been implemented in Ontario for many years. The goal is to continue to support school communities with a comprehensive approach to school health throughout the COVID-19 pandemic based on the capacity of the school and health unit, using strategies that are consistent with COVID-19 health and safety protocols. The pandemic has potentially exacerbated issues such as substance use, delayed immunization, domestic violence, mental health, and food insecurity. Continuing to address broader health and well-being concerns in the school community during the pandemic is important to prevent other challenges in the future.

Below are some examples of the ways in which School PHNs can support school communities. This is **not** a comprehensive list. There is diversity between health units in terms of exactly what services and supports are provided, based on local context. Schools and school boards should contact their local [PHU\(s\)](#) to discuss specific supports available.

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
Identifying priority health issues in the school community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gather information and data to understand what issues may be of concern</li> <li>• Interview key stakeholders to better understand the school context and needs</li> <li>• Consider health inequities related to discrimination, income, housing, etc. that may be affecting student health and well-being</li> <li>• Identify assets and strengths that can be leveraged</li> <li>• Work with the school board Mental Health Leader and school to prioritize issues for action planning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Look at trends in local community health data</li> <li>• Meet with administrators and educators to hear perspectives on health issues and school community strengths</li> <li>• Administer a school questionnaire</li> <li>• Use tools to support evidence-informed decision-making</li> <li>• Summarize issues and factors for consideration, and make recommendations for prioritization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Gathering information and data to understand what issues may be of concern</li> <li>• Providing opportunities and support processes for gathering information</li> <li>• Creating / supporting the use of structures for information sharing such as school councils and student leadership, school board meetings</li> <li>• Fostering and providing advocacy to engender a strong community response to school health issues</li> <li>• Sharing relevant data and status of schools within the community</li> <li>• Aligning to the Healthy Active Living Plans that schools develop as part of their well-being plans</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Help others understand the key health issues in the school community, and set priorities for action</li> </ul>



When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
Developing an action plan to address the identified priority health issues in the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with students and teachers to plan concrete activities and initiatives</li> <li>• Implement and/or support implementation of strategies that promote health and well-being, in alignment with school board Mental Health Strategy and action plan</li> <li>• Consider actions to reduce health inequities</li> <li>• Connect schools with community partners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a school health committee with students, families, and staff to identify ideas and implement them together</li> <li>• Run a health campaign or contest in the school</li> <li>• Work with the school and municipality to create safe and active routes to school</li> <li>• Work on reducing use of food as reward or celebration</li> <li>• Support the launch of a breakfast program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Being a champion of establishing healthy school communities</li> <li>• Assisting in flagging school inequities and areas of need</li> <li>• Highlighting for school community through school newsletters, school council and social media the need for ideas and identification of health issues</li> <li>• Assigning a school lead for initiatives when needed</li> <li>• Identifying resources available to support efforts to address identified issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assist in creating and implementing an action plan to address identified health issues in the school community</li> </ul>
Supporting the implementation of health-related curricula	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide information and evidence to support implementation of health-related curricula</li> <li>• Provide consultation on draft learning materials</li> <li>• Bring a health equity lens to curricula implementation</li> <li>• Provide curriculum-linked resources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide a workshop for educators (e.g., health equity, teaching sexual health)</li> <li>• Provide educator resources on preconception health, positive parenting, healthy pregnancies, etc.</li> <li>• Provide educator resources on health equity, to enable educators to embed health equity concepts into classes such as geography, health, social studies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Facilitating time for teachers and staff to access public health expertise (e.g., consultations, workshops, place public health issues on professional development day agenda)</li> <li>• Including reference to School PHNs within School Learning Plans</li> <li>• Organizing virtual coffee talks and/or virtual lunch and learns to assist in staff engagement and</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support school boards and schools to implement health-related curricula that promotes student health and wellbeing</li> </ul>

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide education and capacity building opportunities for teachers related to health topics</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review materials to strengthen healthy eating content and to ensure a <i>Health and Wellbeing Approach</i></li> </ul>	<p>education (i.e., opportunities to share successes and challenges)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Supporting implementation of curriculum expectations through the lens of public health</li> <li>Working alongside PHUs in developing healthy school communities</li> </ul>	
Developing or reviewing school policies and practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information and evidence to inform policy development</li> <li>Consult about potential health and well-being implications of school policies and practices</li> <li>Support consideration of the health equity implications of policies and practices</li> <li>Support the Equity Focused Health Impact Assessment (EFHIA) processes to ensure policies do not disproportionately impact the school community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the literature for evidence about different policy options</li> <li>Review draft policy documents</li> <li>Conduct a health impact assessment of policies and practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consulting with public health on school policies and practices</li> <li>Obtaining feedback from broader school community</li> <li>Disseminating policies and practices to teachers, parent associations</li> <li>Looking for opportunities within the school community beyond the context of the school itself</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support schools to implement policies and practices that promote health and reduce health inequities</li> </ul>
Preventing and/or addressing substance* use  *Substance includes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with students and teachers to identify and implement evidence-based programs and strategies to prevent or reduce tobacco, e-cigarette, alcohol,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bring this issue to the school health committee (PHN, students, parents, and staff) to identify and implement ideas together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vetting materials for age-appropriate content</li> <li>Facilitating opportunities for proactive campaigns (that are not</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support schools to create a smoke-free environment and to prevent or</li> </ul>






When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
tobacco, e-cigarettes, alcohol, cannabis, opioids, illicit, other substances and emerging products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>cannabis, and other substance use / misuse in schools</li> <li>Support schools to identify and implement harm reduction strategies</li> <li>Connect to supports for enforcement of the <i>Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017</i> on school property</li> <li>Provide information to support strengths-based approaches</li> <li>Act as a liaison to support access to community resources to address social determinants of health (SDOH) impacting the school community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide information about harm reduction approaches</li> <li>Run a health campaign or contest in the school</li> <li>Connect others to the appropriate team in public health to enforce the <i>Smoke-Free Ontario Act, 2017</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>based in fear); act as a connector between nurse and school staff</li> <li>Highlighting health issues in the school community</li> <li>Facilitating the school as hub for community awareness on the pressing health issues</li> <li>Considering how harm reduction approaches can be implemented</li> <li>Support strengths-based and Social Determinants of Health (SDOH)-focused initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reduce other substance use</li> </ul>
Promoting a safe school environment (e.g., issues such as gender identity, healthy sexuality, bullying)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with students and teachers to identify and implement evidence-informed strategies to promote inclusion</li> <li>Ensure the school community has the evidence-based information needed on relevant topics (e.g., healthy sexuality, gender identity, disability)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop resources for students and families on relevant topics (e.g., healthy sexuality, gender identity, disability)</li> <li>Bring issues to the school health committee (PHN, students, parents, staff) to identify and implement ideas together</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Vetting materials for age-appropriate content</li> <li>Facilitating opportunities for initiatives to promote inclusion and safety</li> <li>Facilitating the school as hub for community awareness on the pressing health issues</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support schools in creating a safe environment</li> </ul>
Exploring how to create a school	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide consultation on a variety of health topics and practices that promote healthy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review practices related to providing food as reward</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reconsidering practices that hinder students from making healthy choices (e.g., food as</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support schools to adopt policies</li> </ul>

When you are...	The School Public Health Nurse can...	Examples of actions include...	The Principal / Vice-Principal can support this by...	In order to...
environment that supports healthy choices	environments for students and staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review food and drink options in cafeterias and vending machines (refer to: <a href="#">Policy &amp; Program Memorandum No. 150</a>)</li> <li>Review opportunities throughout the day to engage in physical activity (refer to: <a href="#">Policy &amp; Program Memorandum No. 138</a>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reward, unhealthy options in cafeterias and vending machines, missed opportunities for physical activity)</li> <li>Identifying other practices that may limit likelihood of students and staff making healthy choices</li> </ul>	and practices that support health
Concerned about the health and/or social determinant of health needs of an individual student or family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide support in assessing and understanding needs and concerns</li> <li>Connect individuals and families to school-based and community services and supports</li> <li>Provide contraception, and health education and counseling to individuals (some health units only)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In alignment with school board mental health processes and procedures and in conjunction with school-based mental health clinicians, conduct brief assessment and referral of an individual or family</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Administrator can be conduit to what resources and supports are appropriate to the community (e.g., Catholic Schools / Family Life)</li> <li>Flag issues that speak to equity gaps, in terms of under-served populations or individuals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that individual / family health needs are met</li> </ul>

## 6 Other Public Health Supports for Schools

PHUs are also responsible for ensuring students receive **publicly funded vaccines**, and that **oral and vision screening** are conducted in schools. At some PHUs, School PHNs are involved in school vaccination programs, while in others there is a different team of nurses that implements this program. Oral health and vision screening in schools are conducted by other public health professionals. Schools may also have questions about non-COVID-19-related **infectious diseases and/or IPAC practices**; school PHNs can connect schools with the correct public health professional for all public health-related questions, if this is not already part of their specific role with the school.

## Appendix: Summary of School Public Health Nurse Role in COVID-19 Response: Sample Resource for Families

	<p><b>Who are School Public Health Nurses?</b></p>	<p>There are a variety of nursing roles supporting school communities in Ontario, each with their own focus. The role of School Public Health Nurses (PHNs) is to partner with the entire school community – students, staff, and families – to build healthy school communities that promote student well-being and support learning. Rather than focusing on individual health needs, School PHNs address health issues that are broad, impact the school population, and promote health and prevent disease and injury.</p>
	<p><b>What is their role in supporting the COVID-19 response?</b></p>	<p>School PHNs have a key role in supporting schools in planning, preventing, and responding to COVID-19. Depending on local needs, this may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Helping to develop and support the implementation of school COVID-19 health, safety, and prevention plans.</li> <li>• Assisting with modifying school programs (e.g., physical education, music) in the context of COVID-19.</li> <li>• Supporting staff education on COVID-19 public health measures.</li> <li>• Acting as the school’s key public health contact for support with Infection Prevention and Control (IPAC) guidance, surveillance, screening, and management of COVID-19 cases or outbreaks within schools.</li> <li>• Supporting schools with their communications with families, and the broader school communities about COVID-19 protocols.</li> <li>• Supporting the mental health and well-being of school communities, by working collaboratively with school board Mental Health Leaders to provide resources and connect students, staff, and families with appropriate school and community supports.</li> </ul>
	<p><b>Where are they located?</b></p>	<p>School PHNs are employees of local public health units (PHUs). Generally, School PHNs are assigned to support a number of schools in their regions. They meet with schools in person and/or virtually. Often, they are part of a larger School Health Team at the PHU, which may include IPAC specialists, dietitians, health promoters, and other categories of nurses, such as registered practical nurses (RPNs).</p>
<p>Ontario </p>	<p><b>When were they hired?</b></p>	<p>While there already were school PHNs in most PHUs, in the summer of 2020, the Government of Ontario made new funding available to PHUs to hire up to 625 additional school-focuses nurses to help schools, school boards, and families respond to COVID-19.</p>
	<p><b>Where can I find more information about School PHNs?</b></p>	<p>For more information, please contact your <a href="#">local public health unit (PHU)</a> to discuss the supports available to your school community, including School PHNs.</p>