

COVID-19 SUPPLEMENTAL GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOLS

Last revised: February 9, 2022

This document provides supplemental guidance to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading COVID-19 in public and private schools in Simcoe and Muskoka. It should be used in conjunction with complete guidance provided in the Ministry of Education: [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#) and the Ministry of Health: [COVID-19 Integrated Testing & Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance: Omicron Surge \(January 13, 2021, or as current\)](#) and [COVID-19: Interim Guidance for Schools and Child Care: Omicron Surge \(January 10, 2022, or as current\)](#).

Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) [website](#) regularly for updates and additional guidance. Questions regarding Ministry of Education documents should be referred directly to the Ministry for clarification/direction.

SCREENING

All individuals including students, staff and essential visitors must self-screen each day before entering the school setting using the Government of Ontario's: [COVID-19 school and child care screening](#). If a student, employee, or essential visitor does not pass the daily screening, they must follow the directions listed in the screening tool.

Further to the directions listed in the Ontario COVID-19 school and child care screening tool:

- Medical documentation or proof of a negative test result is not required to return to school.

VACCINATION STATUS

Guidance often differs for those who are fully vaccinated versus not fully vaccinated. Fully vaccinated means that the individual has received:

- A full series of a COVID-19 vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or any combination of such vaccines;
- One or two doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, followed by one dose of a COVID-19 mRNA vaccine authorized by Health Canada, or
- Three doses of a COVID-19 vaccine not authorized by Health Canada, and
- Your final dose of the COVID-19 vaccine was at least 14 days ago or prior to the exposure date.

ISOLATION AND MANAGEMENT OF ILL INDIVIDUALS AT SCHOOL

Follow Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education guidance (listed on page 1 of this document). In addition:

- Follow [SMDHU Guidance: When Symptoms Develop at School or Child Care](#).
- Staff attending to a symptomatic student should wear appropriate PPE including, at a minimum, a medical mask and eye protection.
- Where possible, anyone who is providing care to the student should maintain a distance of 2 metres.

CASE, CONTACT AND OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT

Effective December 31, 2021, the SMDHU will not be conducting COVID-19 case, contact and outbreak management in schools.

- Given the widespread transmission and inability to test all symptomatic individuals, school principals are not expected to notify the SMDHU when a student, employee or visitor has symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19.
- In addition, school boards and schools in Simcoe Muskoka are not required to routinely notify staff, students and families when they receive reports of a positive case, or if a child/student or staff is absent due to symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- School principals are required by the Ministry of Education to report rates of student and staff absenteeism and should follow school board processes for notifying public health when there is a sharp increase in absenteeism (e.g., 30%).

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PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

The Ministry of Education has directed that all staff in a school are required to wear medical masks while inside the school, including in hallways. Staff are not required to wear medical masks outdoors when two metres of distance is maintained from others. **SMDHU recommends school staff wear eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles), in addition to medical masks while working in close contact with students.** Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks will be put in place by administrators.

As per Ministry of Education guidance: Students in Grades 1 to 12 must wear masks in schools, including in hallways and during classes and on school transportation. **SMDHU recommends that school boards and private schools mandate students in kindergarten (JK and SK) to wear high grade, well-fitting, 3-ply cloth or medical masks while attending school in-person during the 2021-2022 school year.**

For questions, please contact schoolhealth@smdhu.org