

COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE: WHEN A STUDENT OR STAFF TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19

Last revised: November 23, 2021

*Note: The following process is intended as a general guide and may be adapted based on circumstances.

Report all suspect or confirmed case of COVID to the health unit:

School principals are legally required to report suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 to the local health unit. If you learn that a student or staff has tested positive for COVID-19, contact your school board's assigned COVID Lead or designate and confirm next steps for notifying the SMDHU.



The health unit will verify the result and then begin an investigation:

Once a positive test result has been verified, the health unit will contact the staff, student (or student's parent/guardian) to begin case and contact investigation. A key part of this investigation is to confirm if the individual attended school / child care during the period of communicability or "POC" (the time that the illness was most contagious).



If the student/staff attended school and/or child care during POC:

SMDHU COVID Lead or designate will notify the appropriate School Board COVID-19 Lead, Private School and/or Child Care Operator to confirm there is a positive case.

The School Board COVID-19 Lead will notify the principal that case and contact management has begun. The school board/school administrator may be asked to provide SMDHU with information regarding contacts/cohorts (as soon as feasible). This may include:

- Attendance records, class/cohort lists and seating charts
- Before/after school child care lists
- Transportation lists and seating charts
- Current contact information for students/staff
- Special assignments/programs/activities (e.g. Special Education)
- Records of essential visitors.

SMDHU will:

- Perform risk assessment of contacts / cohorts.
- Determine if an outbreak is declared, and when the outbreak is over.
- Provide communication for distribution to staff, students (or parents of students), as appropriate.
- Provide recommendations for additional infection prevention and control measures, as required.

In most circumstances, only individuals or cohorts identified as close contacts* will receive communication from the health unit. This will include requirements for self-isolation and/or testing for close contacts and their household members.



If students/staff did not attend school and/or child care during POC:

If through the health unit's investigation, it is determined that the person confirmed to have COVID-19 did not attend school during their period of communicability and there are no close contacts identified at school, then the health unit will not provide communication for the school to send to the school community.

Students, staff, and essential visitors should continue to perform daily self-screening and follow the guidance in the screening tool.

***Note:** Students who are **not fully vaccinated** and in close contact (in a cohort, class, bus, etc.) with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, and children (18 years or under) who live in the same house as someone identified as a close contact, should generally expect to be excluded from school. Those who are **fully vaccinated** should generally expect to be able to continue to attend school.

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ADMINISTRATOR RESPONSIBILITIES

If a school board / school / childcare operator or SMDHU are made aware that a staff or student has tested positive for COVID-19, it is essential to prepare the key information above pertaining to staff and students quickly for the purposes of contact tracing. School boards and schools may be required by the Ministry of Education to post information to their websites if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 that involves a student or staff member and/or if there is an outbreak of COVID-19 in a school setting. It is recommended that school boards and schools work in collaboration with the local health unit to initiate communication protocols and plans for updating and informing necessary stakeholders with the school community (including before and after school programs), when a staff or student has tested positive for COVID-19 in the school. In the interest of privacy, information provided to school communities will not identify the student or staff member who has received a positive COVID-19 test.

PUBLIC HEALTH RESPONSIBILITIES

SMDHU will be responsible for conducting case and contact management activities. Measures will be taken to ensure privacy and avoid disclosure of details to the school community that would lead to the identification of any individual. SMDHU will post information about cases and outbreaks in schools / child care centres on their [COVID-19 dashboard/website](#).

SMDHU will provide school boards / schools / child care with information that can be used to communicate with their school / child care community. The purpose of this communication would be to provide reassurance and guidance and would **not** provide specific information or identifying details.

DECLARING AN OUTBREAK

SMDHU will be responsible for determining if an outbreak exists, declaring an outbreak, and providing direction on outbreak control measures to be implemented. SMDHU will assist in determining which cohort(s) should be sent home, or if a partial, or full, school / child care closure is required. SMDHU will also determine when an outbreak can be declared over.

PRIVACY STATEMENT

The SMDHU is committed to protecting the personal and personal health information that may be disclosed to schools for the purpose of contact tracing and should only be used for that purpose.

School boards/schools/child care operators have an obligation to protect the personal and personal health information of their students and staff. The identity of cases should not be disclosed to parents, or to other students unless deemed necessary by public health.