

506.9 Communicable Disease Prevention – Policy and Procedures

Introduction:

A communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in the workplace include norovirus and seasonal influenza.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. OLA administration and OLA's Joint Health and Safety Committee will monitor and review school and community communicable disease-related information (including orders, guidance, notices and recommendations) issued by our regional or provincial medical health officer.

OLA Routine Communicable Disease Prevention Practices:

- Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g. fever or chills, coughing) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- Use an inclusive and trauma-informed lens, with a focus on mental health and wellness.
- As required by WorkSafeBC, ensure the health of staff by ensuring that steps are taken to reduce the risk to workers from communicable disease.
- Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies. Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands regularly and to cover coughs and sneezes.
- Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes.
- Make sure building ventilation is adequate, and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed.
- Support employees in receiving vaccinations for seasonal influenza and other vaccine-preventable conditions.
- During a period of elevated risk, all direction from regional and provincial medical health officers will be followed.
- Employees, families and visitors will receive information about OLA's measures, practices and policies for managing communicable disease, including policies for staying home when sick.
- Signage will be posted to support health and safety measures.
- OLA's Joint Health and Safety Committee will identify (or receive concerns from other staff) and resolve school health and safety issues. All staff will be reminded how to raise health and safety concerns.
- School property inspections and ongoing supervision will ensure measures are functioning properly, followed and maintained.

Understanding the Risk

The principal is responsible for regularly monitoring and reviewing the communicable disease-related information that is provided by Fraser Health or the Provincial Health Officer. This includes all issued orders, guidelines, notices, and recommendations. In addition, staff follows the guidelines that are provided by the Superintendent. This information is regularly communicated to staff to understand and minimize risk for communicable disease transmission in our school.

Implementing Measures, Practices And Policies To Reduce The Risk

Ongoing Measures – Policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease are in place so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick. These include CISVA Policy 310, Employee

Leaves of Absence, as well as OLA Policy 506.9 Communicable Disease Prevention. Measures, practices and policies are regularly reviewed in staff meetings and documented in minutes.

Supportive School Environment

- Staff will model personal practices (e.g. hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) and assist younger students if needed
- Administration will share reliable information, including info from the BC Centre for Disease Control, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, and local health authorities to parents and families.
- Personal practices will be promoted in the school (e.g. posters)
- Individual choices for personal practice (e.g. choosing to wear a mask or face covering) will be supported and treated with respect, recognizing varying personal comfort levels.

Health Screening

- Parents and caregivers should assess their children daily for illness before sending them to school.
- Staff and other adults should complete a daily health check prior to entering the school.
- Staff, children, or other persons in the school who test positive for a **communicable disease** will be directed to follow the guidance on the BCCDC website as to how long they should self-isolate. They can return to school when they no longer need to self-isolate as long as symptoms have improved and they are well enough to participate in regular activities.
- If a student or staff member develops symptoms at school:
 - They will be separated from their classmates or colleagues
 - Separated children will be supervised and cared for
 - The student's parent or guardian will be contacted, and asked to have their child picked up as soon as possible
 - Staff will be asked to go home as soon as possible
 - Custodial staff will clean and disinfect the areas the person used
 - Staff responsible for facility cleaning will clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which the bodily fluids may have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others.
- Students and staff who experience symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g. seasonal allergies) can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any new or unexplained symptoms, they should seek assessment by a healthcare provider.

Hand Hygiene & Respiratory Etiquette & Personal Space

- Rigorous hand-washing with plain soap and water or an effective hand sanitizer reduces the spread of illness. Diligent hand hygiene will be encouraged and regular opportunities for students and staff to wash their hands will be facilitated. Hand-washing will be encouraged before/after breaks and eating, using washroom and using frequently touched shared equipment; the importance of diligent hand hygiene will be promoted to staff and students regularly (including hand hygiene posters at handwashing sites); hand-washing supplies will always be well stocked including soap, paper towels and where appropriate, alcohol-based hand rub.
- Staff will assist younger students with hand hygiene as needed.

- Students may bring their own sanitizer or plain soap if they are on the list authorized by Health Canada or have a medical condition that requires specialized soaps.
- Soap and water are preferred when hands are visibly dirty. If it is not available, use an alcohol-based hand wipe followed by alcohol-based hand rub.
- Staff will teach and reinforce respiratory etiquette amongst students: cough or sneeze into the elbow sleeve or a tissue; throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene; refrain from touching eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands; refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.
- Staff and students will be encouraged to respect others personal space.
- Staff and students will be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g. food, drinks, etc.).

Masks

- The decision to wear a mask or face covering is a personal choice for everyone. This choice will be supported and treated with respect.
- We will continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who have forgotten theirs but would like to wear one.

General Ventilation and Air Circulation

- Mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems will be operated and maintained as per standards and specifications in Part 4 of the OHS Regulation.
- Windows will be opened when weather permits if it doesn't impact the functioning of ventilation systems.
- When using air conditioners and fans in ventilated spaces, air will be moved from high places to lower places instead of blowing air directly from one person's breathing zone to another's.

Shared Spaces

- OLA will use classroom and learning environment configurations and activities that best meet learner needs and preferred educational approaches.

Music, Physical Education, Sports, Clubs and Extracurricular Activities

- Students will be encouraged to practice proper hand hygiene before and after shared equipment use.
- Equipment that touches the mouth (eg instrument mouth pieces, water bottles, utensils) or has been in contact with bodily fluids will not be shared unless cleaned and disinfected in between uses.

Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities and/or Receiving Health Services

- OLA will implement health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities.
- Staff and those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving direct or delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities who are in close proximity to a student will follow routine infection control practices and care plans for the child, if applicable.

Maintaining A Clean Environment

- Enhanced cleaning practices will be incorporated whenever feasible as part of sustainable communicable disease management.
- General cleaning of the premises, and cleaning and disinfecting of frequently touched surfaces (such as doors and cabinet handles, stair railings, washrooms, shared office spaces, desks, keyboards, light switches, and communications devices), will occur at least once in a 24-hour period. Surfaces that are visibly dirty will be cleaned and disinfected. Garbage containers will be emptied daily. Paper hand towels will be provided rather than hand dryers.
- Frequently-touched items like toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.) can be used.
- When cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine): Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids; Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves; Follow regular health and safety procedure and regularly used PPE for blood and bodily fluids (e.g. toileting, spitting, biting).
- Cleaning staff include a full-time custodian, part-time custodian, PEC Maintenance Coordinator, Participation Program Parents (Saturdays for 2 hours per room). Custodian sets out supplies and video tutorials are provided to train cleaners.
- Cleaning protocols reviewed monthly by Joint Health & Safety Committee.
- Building ventilation is inspected annually (Pacific Mechanical) and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. Room Filters replaced quarterly.
- Joint Health & Safety Committee uses “Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Ventilation and air circulation” to guide inspection. Maintenance coordinator reviews HVAC inspection report and updates PEC.
- During periods of elevated risk, the Joint Health and Safety team will assemble to discuss and establish plans in relation to guidance and new information provided by the local or provincial health officers.
- Depending on severity of risk, formal meetings with stakeholder groups will be conducted. Consultation with the Superintendent’s Office will occur as needed and plans will be documented.

Communicating Measures, Practices And Policies

OLA will support the implementation of personal prevention practices through:

- Providing regular reminders to students, families, and staff about the importance of completing a daily health check, staying home when sick, and following public health recommendations.
- Having staff demonstrate and model how to practice personal prevention measures at school (e.g., hand hygiene, etc.).
- Sharing trusted information from the BC Centre for Disease Control.

To ensure that everyone entering our school receives information about our measures, practices and policies, we have instituted the following:

All employees are provided with information on OLA Policy 506.9 Communicable Disease Prevention and CISVA Policy 310 Employee Leaves of Absences. Employees will also sign a “Statement of Understanding” that they have read and understood the necessity of completing a daily health check and staying at home if sick. Itinerant staff, Teachers On-Call and visitors will be made aware of the school’s health and safety measures and their responsibility to follow them at all times.

Training regarding school procedures and expectations has been provided to staff. Staff are encouraged to respond with any questions. Staff will be reminded how to raise safety concerns (through health and safety committee) and any new information relating to communicable disease in the workplace will be posted in the staffroom and emailed to staff.

Parents and caregivers will be made aware that students must stay home if they are sick. Parents and caregivers will be informed about the extra precautions being taken at the school.

Signage is posted in washrooms and classrooms to support hygiene measures.

OLA will continue to support personal prevention practices through positive and inclusive approaches, aligned with existing professional practices to address non-compliant behaviour.

Approaches will not exclude students from participating in school or potentially result in stigma. Schools will continue to utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (e.g., gatherings and events), including considerations around respecting others personal space.

OLA will notify public health and the school community if lower attendance than normal is observed, based on thresholds set by public health. Public health will then investigate to determine if additional action should be taken. Our local Medical Health Officer may issue a recommendation for an individual school, a group of schools, a school district or all schools within the health authority region, to implement specific additional health and safety measures during times of increased risk.

WorkSafeBC communicable disease prevention guidance will be followed and communication, training and orientation will be provided to ensure health and safety of the staff.

Monitoring School Environment And Updating Plan As Necessary

Health and safety meetings are held to review workplace practices relating to communicable disease and other health and safety matters. Additional communication may be required as new information is made available that may affect work practices.

Administration and joint health and safety committees meet at least monthly to evaluate measures, practices, and policies at the school. Discoveries from staff concerns, walk-throughs, or site inspections will be addressed and discussed with the staff if necessary.

Staff will be encouraged to speak (or write) to a Joint Health & Safety Committee member if they witness or have concerns. If not satisfactorily addressed, staff will be encouraged to bring concerns to the principal and PEC. Staff will be reminded of the process at staff meetings