

Dear school district superintendents and school administrators,

As schools are set to fully return to in-person instruction, I am providing the following messaging for you to share with your school communities.

1. Changes to contact tracing for COVID-19 in K-12 settings

The Omicron variant spreads rapidly and, as such, contact tracing is a less effective measure in the timely management of COVID-19. What this means is that Public Health is no longer able to contact everyone who tests positive. Individuals who test positive for COVID-19 should follow advice from the BC Centre for Disease Control, found here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/if-you-have-covid-19>, which includes:

- How long to self-isolate depending on vaccination status
- How to report a positive test result
- How to notify close contacts

As Public Health is not contacting every person who tests positive, school exposures will not be issued by Public Health for individual cases. In the event of a declared outbreak, Public Health will issue a public notification.

Public Health will continue to work with schools if, for example, there is a significant increase in absenteeism that is atypical for the time of year, and actions are to be taken, such as notification to the parents and guardians of the affected grade or school community.

2. Enhanced safety measures for schools

Enhanced measures have been added to school safety plans to prevent and limit COVID-19 transmission in school settings. The updated measures can be found here:

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidelines-addendum.pdf>.

It remains important that staff and students continue following public health measures, such as good hand hygiene, staying home when sick, wearing a mask that fits well and covers both the nose and the mouth, and getting vaccinated.

3. Reminders to staff and students returning from international travel

On December 15, 2021, Canadians were advised to avoid non-essential travel outside of Canada, regardless of vaccination status: <https://travel.gc.ca/travelling/health-safety/travel-health-notices/226>. As of January 7, 2022, this advisory has remained in effect.

For those returning to Canada:

- Parents and guardians are reminded that, as of January 7th, 2022:
 - Unvaccinated and partially vaccinated children and youth up to and including 17 years of age are subject to the 14 day quarantine requirement.
 - During quarantine, these children are not to attend school in-person.
- Families planning to travel or have returned from international travel should check this website for the most up-to-date quarantine and testing requirements: <https://travel.gc.ca/travel-covid/travel-restrictions/covid-vaccinated-travellers-entering-canada>

4. Vaccination

Anyone five years of age and older is eligible for the vaccine. Parents can register their child in the Get Vaccinated provincial system to be notified of when their child can get vaccinated.

Please visit <https://www.getvaccinated.gov.bc.ca/s/> for information on registering for the vaccine and how to book an appointment.

Thank you for your continued partnership with Public Health in ensuring a safe return to in-person schooling.

Sincerely,

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