



Vancouver Island West School District 84
OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY PROGRAM

SECTION P

**PANDEMIC EXPOSURE CONTROL PROGRAM:
INFLUENZA AND NOVEL CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

INTRODUCTION

This Pandemic Exposure Control Program is designed to protect employees of School District 84 from infectious diseases, with specific reference to Influenza pandemics and the current COVID-19 pandemic. Employees must take all required preventative measures to ensure workers are not exposed.

HEALTH HAZARDS

The effects of pandemic influenza are expected to be much more severe than seasonal influenza. The effects of the current COVID-19 pandemic have spread worldwide. Most people will not have immunity to the COVID-19 virus and grandparents, seniors, elders, and people with compromised immune systems are most vulnerable.

Symptoms

Seasonal flu affects people to varying degrees, with symptoms including headache, fever, fatigue, sore throat, and runny nose and, in some cases, secondary infections such as pneumonia may develop.

Symptoms of the COVID-19 pandemic influenza are likely to include **high fever** (higher than 38°C), **chest pain, sore throat, sneezing, and difficulty breathing**. Any employees unsure of their symptoms are able to use the online self-assessment tool at <https://covid19.thrive.health/> or contact HealthLinkBC (8-1-1) at any time. If symptoms are severe, such as difficulty breathing or chest pain, employees must call 9-1-1 or go to the nearest Emergency Department.

Any employees who are experiencing mild symptoms of COVID-19 are required to contact their health provider and stay home and self-isolate for 10 days after the initial start of their symptoms. Coughing may persist for several weeks, so a cough alone does not mean that self-isolation needs to continue beyond 10 days.

Transmission

The BC Centre for Disease Control advises that influenza is communicable for 24 hours before the onset of symptoms and three to five days afterward (this may be longer in some children and some adults).

However, the BC Centre for Disease Control at this time believes that the COVID-19 virus is primarily spread after the onset of symptoms. This guidance is based on current available scientific evidence and expert opinion and is subject to change as new information on the clinical spectrum, transmissibility and epidemiology becomes available.

An influenza pandemic has three primary routes of transmission:

1. **Direct and Indirect Contact Transmission** – Direct contact involves skin-to-skin contact, such as shaking hands with an infected person, student care or an emergency response activity that requires direct personal contact. Indirect contact involves a worker touching a surface contaminated with the virus (such as a table, doorknob, telephone, or computer keyboard) followed by touching one's eyes, nose, or mouth, or sharing food items or utensils with an infected person.
2. **Droplet Transmission** - Large droplets may be generated when an infected person coughs or sneezes, and also during certain medical procedures such as cough induction. Droplets travel a short distance through the air, and can be deposited on inanimate surfaces or in the eyes, nose, or mouth.

3. Airborne Transmission - Airborne (inhalable) particles can be generated from coughs and sneezes, and from some medical procedures such as endotracheal intubation, bronchoscopy, nebulizer treatment, or airway suctioning. Coughs and sneezes produce both large droplets and smaller airborne particles. The smaller particles remain suspended in air for longer periods, and can be inhaled. The large droplets can also evaporate quickly to form additional inhalable particles.

The COVID-19 virus has two anticipated primary routes of transmission – direct and indirect contact transmission and droplet transmission. Currently, health experts believe that COVID-19 is not transmitted through airborne transmission. (<http://www.vch.ca/about-us/news/vancouver-coastal-health-statement-on-coronavirus>)

STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Board of Education for School District 84 is committed to providing a safe and healthy workplace for all of the employees. A combination of measures will be used to minimize worker exposure to pandemic influenza and the current COVID-19 pandemic. School District 84 work procedures will protect not only the workers, but also other workers who may have to enter the facilities. All employees must follow the procedures outlined in this program to prevent or reduce exposure to pandemic influenza and the current COVID-19 pandemic.

RESPONSIBILITIES

Employer Responsibilities

- Assess which workers should be at work and take steps to reduce the risk of exposure to the pandemic.
- Ensure that site-specific control measures will be implemented and documented.
- Ensure that materials (for example, soap in each washroom and kitchen) and any worker training materials that are required to implement and maintain the plan are readily available where and when they are required.
- Ensure that any employee with COVID-19-like symptoms self-isolate at home for a minimum of 10 days from onset of symptoms until resolved, and any who have returned from international travel must self-isolate for 14 days.
- Educate and train supervisors and workers to an acceptable level of competency with regard to the best practices to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses.
- Review the program annually to ensure its effectiveness and that available control technologies are selected and used when practical.
- Maintain records of training and inspections.
- Communicate the Pandemic Exposure Control Plan to all workers and post a copy on the District's website at www.sd84.bc.ca.

Supervisor Responsibilities

- Ensure that workers are adequately instructed on the controls for the hazards at the location.
- Ensure that workers follow all directives with regard to maintaining good hygiene (regular hand washing with soap and water for 20 seconds, covering mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing, and maintaining social distancing (two metres)).
- Ensure that schools continue to follow the highest standard of cleaning practices.
- Provide adequate personal protective equipment if necessary.
- Direct work in a manner that eliminates or minimizes the risk to workers.
- Read all School District 84 updates that are posted on the District's website at www.sd84.bc.ca.
- Check email regularly.
- Use reliable sources of information to ensure that shared information is fact and not fear-based.
- Keep records.

Worker Responsibilities

- Know the hazards of the workplace.
- Follow established work procedures as directed by the Employer or Supervisor.
- Use any required PPE as instructed.
- Report any unsafe conditions or acts to their Supervisor.
- Know how and when to report exposure incidents.
- Self-isolate at home for at least 14 days after return from international travel.
- If having a confirmed or potential case of pandemic influenza or COVID-19, or if sharing a residence with a person who has been exposed to COVID-19, immediately contact their health care provider and Supervisor regarding the required self-isolation timelines prior to returning to work.
- Read all School District 84 updates that are posted on the District's website at www.sd84.bc.ca.
- Check email regularly.
- Use reliable sources of information to ensure that shared information is fact and not fear-based.

RISK IDENTIFICATION, ASSESSMENT AND CONTROL

Risk Assessment for Pandemic Influenza and COVID-19

The following risk assessment table is adapted from WorkSafeBC Regulation Guideline G6.34-6.

	<u>Low Risk</u> Workers who typically have no contact with people infected with pandemic influenza	<u>Moderate Risk</u> Workers who may be exposed to infected people from time to time in relatively large, well-ventilated workspaces.	<u>High Risk</u> Workers who may have contact with infected patients or with infected people in small, poorly ventilated workspaces
Hand Hygiene	Yes (preferably washing with soap and water or using an alcohol-based rub, or using hand wipes that contain effective disinfectant)	Yes (preferably washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand rub, or using hand wipes that contain effective disinfectant)	Yes (preferably washing with soap and water, or using an alcohol-based hand rub, or using hand wipes that contain effective disinfectant)
Disposable Gloves	Not required	Not required (unless handling contaminated objects on a regular basis)	Yes, in some cases (for example, when working directly with pandemic influenza patients)
Aprons, gowns, or similar body protection	Not required	Not required	Yes, in some cases (for example when working directly with pandemic influenza patients)
Eye protection – goggles or face shield	Not required	Not required	Yes, in some cases (for example, when working directly with pandemic influenza patients)
Airway protection – respirators	Not required	Not required (unless likely to be exposed to coughing and sneezing)	Yes (minimum N95 respirator or equivalent)

Using this guideline as a reference, the risk level for School District 84 workers is moderate to low if following the direction of the Health Minister and the Provincial Medical Health Officer in terms of maintaining good hygiene and social distancing.

Risk Control

The WSBC Regulation requires employers to implement infectious disease controls in the following order of preference:

1. Engineering controls.
2. Administrative controls.
3. Personal protective equipment (PPE).

Vancouver Island West School District 84 will take its lead from the Health Ministry and the Provincial Health Officer in terms of implementing expectations around hygiene, social distancing and, when necessary, school closures. Administrative controls will be used throughout the District to control the risk of exposure; for example, frequent hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette, no shaking hands, protocol re access to facilities, maintaining the highest standard of cleaning practices, and requiring employees to stay home if sick.

Entering and Leaving School District 84 Facilities and Social Distancing

- During a pandemic, protocols for accessing and exiting School District 84 buildings will be communicated to all workers.
- Employees are required to follow safe social distancing guidelines of maintaining a distance of six feet or two meters between people, and remain in their classroom, office or workspace as much as possible.
- Employees will use alternate means of meeting together such as Zoom, FaceTime, Skype, Microsoft Teams, etc.
- If it is necessary to meet face-to-face with others, the number must be such that the social distancing requirement of six feet or two meters among each person is met.
- Any other site-specific requirements will be communicated to employees at the worksite.

Hand Washing

It will be expected that all employees will wash their hands regularly with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) and avoid touching their face (eyes, nose, mouth), as these are two of the best ways to minimize the risk of infection. Proper hand washing helps prevent the transfer of infectious material from the hands to other parts of the body — particularly the eyes, nose, and mouth — or to other surfaces that are touched.

Wash your hands immediately:

- When you arrive at work and before you leave to go home.
- After blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- After handling materials that may be contaminated.
- Before and after preparing food or handling any raw foods.
- Before eating, drinking, handling contact lenses, or applying makeup.
- After all washroom breaks.

Soap and paper towels are located in each washroom and kitchen area in School District 84.

Cough/Sneeze Etiquette

All School District 84 workers are expected to follow cough/sneeze etiquette which is a combination of measures that minimizes the transmission of diseases via droplet or airborne routes. Cough/sneeze etiquette includes the following components:

- Follow the posted directions at each worksite with regard to proper hand washing – and these are posted in washrooms and kitchens.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a sleeve or tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Use tissues to contain secretions, and dispose of them promptly in a waste container.
- Turn your head away from others when coughing or sneezing and wash your hands regularly.

Worker Training

School District 84 employees will receive training in the following:

- The risk of exposure to pandemic influenza and COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms
- Safe work procedures to be followed, including hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette
- Location of washing facilities
- How to seek first aid
- How to report an exposure to or symptoms of pandemic influenza or COVID-19

Health Monitoring

All employees are required to promptly report any symptoms of pandemic influenza or COVID-19 to their Supervisor and the First Aid Attendant.

Record Keeping

All Supervisors will keep records of instruction and training provided to workers regarding pandemic influenza or COVID-19, as well as exposure reports and first aid records.

Working from Home

All employees who have been approved to work from home during a pandemic will be expected to follow the same protocols and expectations outlined in this Program with regard to physical distancing, personal hygiene and self-isolation. Any other appropriate protocols, including a check-in procedure, will be developed and communicate to employees as necessary.

Annual Review

This Pandemic Exposure Control Program will be reviewed every year and updated as necessary, in consultation with the District Occupational Health and Safety Committee.

*Provincial information and resources related to COVID-19 is available at
<http://www.gov.bc.ca/covid19> or by calling 1-888-COVID19.*

General Hand Washing Procedures



1

Remove all jewelry.*

2

Turn on warm water.



3

Wet your hands. Keep fingertips pointed down.

4

Apply soap from dispenser.



5

Rub hands together (10-15 s), creating a lather.

6

Pay particular attention to areas between your fingers.



7

Rub fingernails against palm of opposite hand. Clean nails with brush if soiled.

8

Rinse hands from the wrist to fingertips. Keep fingers pointed down.



9

Dry hands with a paper towel.

10

Use a clean, dry paper towel to turn off faucet. Do not touch faucet with your hand.



11

Discard paper towel.

Alcohol Hand Rub

When using alcohol hand rub, follow steps 1, 4 (applying alcohol hand rub, rather than soap), 5, 6, & 7. Allow hands to air dry.

* It is preferable not to wear jewelry to work. However, remember to put jewelry back on after Step 11.