

Communicable Disease Regulation

1320-10 | Communicable Disease Regulation

Date Approved:

Date Amended: July 31 2019

The nature of a school setting provides opportunities for the spread of infection. Infection in one or more children will pose a risk for other students and staff, depending on the ease with which the infection is spread.

Decisions to intervene to prevent the spread of infection within a school are to be made in collaboration with the School Medical Officer and the Superintendent of Schools considering:

1. Availability and effectiveness of specific prevention methods, and
2. The risk of serious complications from infection.

The responsibility for providing medical information and controlling the spread of a communicable disease belongs with Northern Health. The ultimate responsibility for identifying students at risk lies with the School Medical Officer. The School District takes direction from the School Medical Officer in these situations.

Consultation with the School Medical Officer provides school staff with information regarding action which may be necessary following exposure to a specific communicable disease. As a result, medical information/instruction may be provided to schools and parents. The process will be dependent on the need for specific action and may include verbal consultation, written information sheets, or a letter for a specific group of students. If a communicable disease is identified and involves significant risk or public interest, the Superintendent of Schools will implement the plan and guidelines as discussed and outlined by Northern Health.

The School District's role is to help Health Professionals with the logistics of

1. Informing staff, students and parents about procedures, and
2. Assisting in forwarding written instructions to parents to expedite any needed process.

Procedures:

Principals must be prepared to implement the following steps within a period of 24 hours, depending on the urgency of the situation. The plan outlines recommended actions. It should be noted that the circumstances surrounding each situation are unique and changes to this plan may be required by the School Medical Officer.

Step 1

Contact the Superintendent of Schools.

Step 2

The Superintendent of Schools will contact the School Medical Officer regarding the need for activating an action plan.

Step 3

Each Principal should ensure that contact data for all students is easily accessible and available in hard copy. This includes lists of students enrolled, class groupings and bus groupings, as well as medical information regarding at-risk students to facilitate rapid dissemination of information.

Step 4

The principal should assure that the whereabouts of students on the day of an incident of potential exposure are known (field trips, absenteeism, etc.)

Step 5

The School Medical Officer will be asked to provide the Superintendent of Schools with the name and telephone number of the Northern Health staff member who will be the liaison and who will respond to inquiries from parents and the media. It is important that the Superintendent of Schools and the Northern Health staff member communicate frequently to ensure both Northern Health and the School District are properly informed.

No information regarding the medical situation should be provided by the school to parents or students, unless specifically requested in writing by the School Medical Officer to do so.

Step 6

The Health Unit may request that a series of actions be immediately taken at the school level; for example:

- that the principal assist in identifying contacts, or students at risk
- that the principal curtail certain activities at the school for a prescribed period of time, e.g. assemblies, field trips where students will be in close contact
- that the principal send a notice home with students
- that the principal assist the Health Unit in calling an emergency meeting of parents at the school to provide information or medication for some or all students.

REFERENCES:

1320 Communicable Diseases and Immunizations Policy

Quick Guide to Common Childhood Diseases – BC Centre for Disease Control, May 2009