



BULLETIN 16 • July 31

CUPE K-12

Caring for B.C. students and public schools



Duty to accommodate

What if members have compromised immune systems, or other medical conditions that put them at a higher risk for COVID-19?

Members with a medical condition may be entitled to an accommodation. Depending on the circumstances, the School District may be required to consider alternative working arrangements. Those arrangements will be tailored to the individual circumstances, and might include modified work schedules, changes to the working environment, the provision of additional PPE, or working from home arrangements.

The onus is on the member and the union to prove that the member has a medical condition that requires accommodation. That means that the member will need to get at least a written doctor's note supporting their request.

If members need a medical accommodation, they should make an appointment with their physician immediately to discuss their circumstances. Members should provide their doctor with as much information as possible about the specific job, and the plan for returning to work so that the doctor can give an informed opinion about whether the workplace is safe for them, and what accommodations might be needed.

Do not leave these issues until September! Members in this situation should schedule an appointment with their doctor right away. Contact your Local for assistance if needed.

What if members refuse to go to work in September?

Unless they are granted a leave of absence such as a medical leave, school

district employees must attend work or risk the possibility of discipline. It is not up to individual members to decide whether or not they are comfortable returning to work. Anyone who has specific circumstances that pose problems for their return to work should raise those issues with their Local and the district well in advance of September.

Learning groups (cohorts)

What is a learning group (cohort)?

A learning group (cohort) is an extra layer of protection that provides an opportunity for children to interact in school. This recommendation of the PHO increases the ability to better track if there is a COVID outbreak. Learning groups are limited to a maximum 60 students and staff in elementary and middle schools and 120 students and staff in high schools.

Support staff and teachers are included in the learning group numbers. They can leave the cohort as long as they are practising physical distancing.

Are learning groups similar to household bubbles?

No. Your household bubble is made up of the people closest to you that you can hug, and you don't have to practice physical distancing with them. The learning group does not negate physical distancing. We know we can't always maintain physical distancing at all times in schools and learning groups make sure that risk periods are small and only with a limited number of students.

Why use learning groups?

Learning groups are recommended by the PHO as a way to reduce the number of interactions between

students and staff, and to limit potential exposure.

Find more information [here](#).

Health and safety

Will all school districts need to follow the same safety protocols?

All districts must adhere to the same safety guidelines as set out by the Provincial Health Officer, Dr. Bonnie Henry. Implementation may vary slightly to district to district as they meet their individual needs.

Please bring your safety concerns to your site health and safety committee.

Other

How will stage 2 planning work?

Districts are required to consult with unions in the district as part of the planning for stage two. Locals are encouraged to contact their districts to start these discussions now.

How is government helping?

The Ministry of Education has allocated \$45.6 million to schools to be used for various needs including hiring more staff, purchasing masks, and \$3 million to support remote learning (including the purchase of devices and software).

We are working to find answers for many questions our members have and will add them to future FAQs.

The steering committee continues to meet and we will continue to advocate on behalf of members' concerns.

Find the most current FAQ at bcschools.cupe.ca