



K-12 Communicable Disease Guidelines for new school year

The B.C. government has released an up-to-date [Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) and the [Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) in preparation for the start of the 2021/2022 school year. The guidance replaces previous COVID-19 guidelines and take effect August 24, 2021.

Highlights of the guidance include:

- Vaccines are highly recommended for all staff and eligible students. At this time, [proof of vaccination requirements for non-essential public places](#) announced by the province will not apply to K-12 schools, or before and after school programs.
- **Mandatory masks indoors and on buses for students in grades' 4 and up, and for in-school staff provincewide.** Masks for students in grades' 3 and below are recommended. BC WorkSafe guidelines and provincial health orders will apply in administrative offices and other staff-only environments.
- Daily cleaning of frequent touch surfaces or when visibly dirty, and daily cleaning of low touch surfaces. General cleaning in line with regular practices.
- Ministry of Education and BCCDC are advising regional approaches – local medical health officers can put local orders in place based on factors such as increased community transmission and/or low vaccination rates.
- All school HVAC systems will continue to be regularly inspected and, moving forward, provincial funding will continue to be made available to upgrade or replace HVAC systems through routine capital programs. Through the work of CUPE members, school districts will continue to ensure all HVAC systems are operated and maintained so they continue to work properly.

There will be a transition from Districts being required to have a *COVID-19 Safety Plan* to having a *Communicable Disease Prevention Plan*. It should be reviewed regularly by Site Committees and Joint Health and Safety Committees.

Daytime Custodial Services

While the commitment to daily cleaning is encouraging, CUPE will continue to advocate for permanent daytime custodial services to be provided in all school districts across the province. This is a critical priority for K-12 Presidents Council, and we have heard widespread support from other stakeholders in the education system. We will continue to work with the province and all stakeholders to build on the extremely positive results daytime custodial services have had for the health of students, families, workers, and communities.

Vaccinations

CUPE strongly recommends vaccinations to all members, as they are crucial to limiting the spread of COVID-19. The benefits of vaccinations clearly outweigh any risks, and we ask that you discuss any questions you have with your medical practitioners.

Reminder: All CUPE members working in the K-12 education system are asked to contact their Local immediately if they are asked by their employer about vaccination status, or if they ask for any other information regarding immunization.

Additional resources from CUPE's Health & Safety Branch on COVID-19 vaccines:

[Frequently Asked Questions](#)

[Workers' Rights](#)

Read more from the [Ministry of Education on the updated guidance](#). The complete guidance is online at [Public Health Communicable Disease Guidance for K-12 Schools](#) along with the updated, [Provincial Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings](#) and the [K-12 Education Recovery Plan](#).