

Communicable Disease Plan COVID - 19

Nelson Christian Family of Schools/Programs

REVISED September 1, 2022

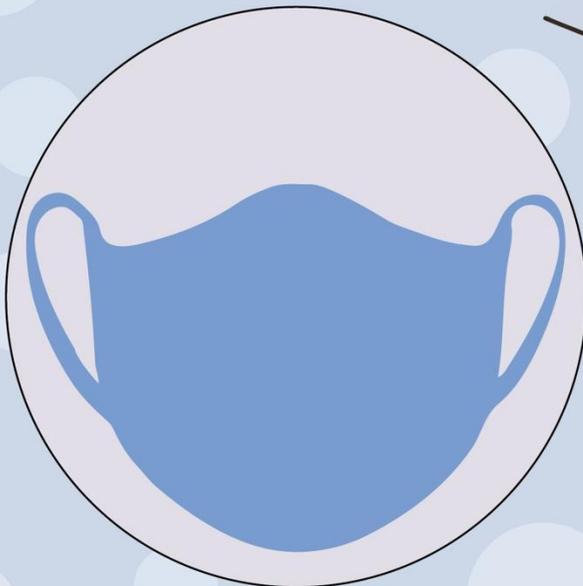
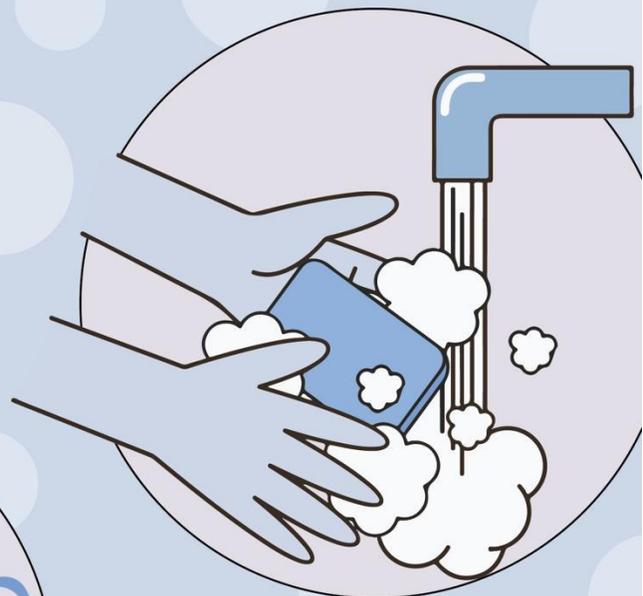


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1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted, and continues to impact students, staff and families in many ways, with some longer-term impacts of the pandemic yet to be realized. Nelson Christian School Society was fortunate that during the 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 school years, we did not have any COVID-19 outbreaks that negatively impacted the operation of any of our schools or programs. The measures that we implemented were effective in reducing transmission and keeping our doors open.

As a society, we strive to follow public health measures in an effort to keep our students, staff and families safe from the transmission of any communicable disease. As such, these plans do not only focus on COVID-19, but create practices to mitigate the transmission other communicable diseases as well.

2. Key Principles of the Guidelines

- All school authorities are required to have Communicable Disease Prevention plans in place, which focus on reducing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases. This document serves as the Communicable Disease Plan for all Nelson Christian School Society schools and programs
- Controls for Communicable Disease Prevention continue to be:
 - Hand Hygiene,
 - Ventilation,
 - Health Checks,
 - Increased Cleaning and Disinfection,
 - Recommended use of Non-Medical Masks

3. Regional Differences

NCSS will comply with all orders (provincial, regional, and local) issued by a Medical Health Officer. These orders or guidelines may augment the Provincial Communicable Disease Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings based on epidemiological data. Regional or local orders would consider:

- Increased community transmissions
- Communities with low vaccination uptake
- Local epidemiology

These orders may be issued as part of a local or regional strategy, but may also be issued to an individual school, a grouping of schools, a school authority, all schools within the health authority region, or some combination thereof, during times of elevated risk.

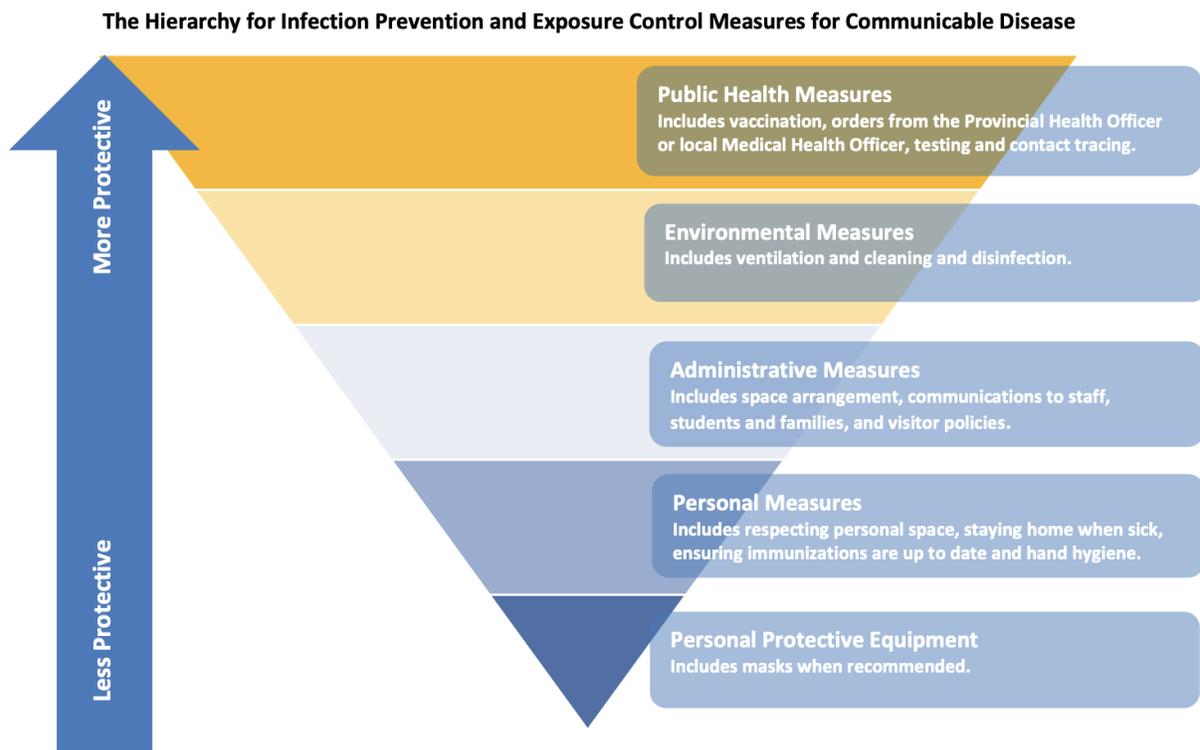
These measures may include:

- limits on gatherings and events
- reconfiguring room arrangements or incorporating more activities that maximize space between people and reduce face-to-face contact
- limiting visitors

- recommending increased mask use

4. Infection Prevention & Exposure Control Measures

Infection prevention and exposure control measures (also called communicable disease measures or health and safety measures) help create safe environments by reducing the spread of communicable diseases (like COVID-19). Schools and learning centres provide a controlled environment in which access to the public is restricted. As such, these environments allow for greater use of administrative measures as all individuals present are part of the school environment. The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures that should be taken to reduce the transmission of communicable diseases in schools. Control measures at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of communicable diseases are substantially reduced.



5. Supportive School Environments

Schools and Learning Centres can support students to practice personal preventive measures by:

- Having staff model these behaviors.
- Promoting safety measures in the school using visual aids like signage and posters

NCSS will share any applicable links to reliable communicable disease Information on the website of each school/program and/or via our parent communication system (ParentSquare) to provide information to parents, families, and caregivers. Additional information that NCSS receives from our Regional Medical Health Officers or Interior Health may be distributed to parents, families and caregivers by the individual School or School/program Administrators. School staff will utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in preventive practices and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature. Staff should also utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (e.g., gatherings and events) and interacting with other staff and students, including considerations around respecting others personal space. Students and staff may choose to wear additional personal protective equipment beyond the required, and those choices will be respected. School and program administrators are encouraged to review the information in this section with their school community, to increase awareness and support from staff, students, and families.

6. Vaccines

Vaccines are the most effective way to reduce the risk of communicable diseases in schools and communities.

COVID-19 Vaccines

The vaccines used in B.C. remain highly effective against COVID-19, including among variants of concern (such as the Delta Variant). Vaccinated people aged 12 and older tend to have milder illness if they get infected and are also less likely to spread COVID-19 than unvaccinated people 12 and older. Public health strongly encourages all eligible students and staff to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 to protect themselves and those around them including those who are not eligible to be vaccinated. People over 12 who are not vaccinated are at higher risk of getting and spreading COVID-19, with age the greatest factor of individual risk of severe illness. Most COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths are now among unvaccinated adults. According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, children under 12 continue to be less likely to get and spread COVID-19 and have a low risk of serious outcomes if they do get COVID-19.

While COVID-19 is present in our communities, there will continue to be COVID-19 exposures involving students and staff. However, the BC Centre Disease Control reports that, with the increasing proportion of people being fully vaccinated and effective communicable disease measures continuing to be in place, exposures are unlikely to lead to further transmission.

At this time vaccination is not required for Preschool and K-12 staff or students.

Working with Interior Health

NCSS works with Interior Health to:

- Share evidence-based information (e.g., from BCCDC and ImmunizeBC), and details on how and where people can get vaccinated, with staff, students, and families prior to the start of the school year; and

- Explore opportunities to establish school-based vaccination clinics to help increase community uptake. This includes provision of space for public health nurses or other qualified health personnel to carry out their duties (including immunization).

7. Physical Distancing and Space Arrangements

As required or during a communicable disease community outbreak, public health or the NCCS school/program may require that space between people be maximized. There are several strategies that schools/programs can consider helping create space between people and to support students and staff in returning to school using a trauma-informed approach:

- Remind students and staff about respecting others' personal space. Use visual supports, signage, prompts, video modelling, etc. as necessary.
- Use available space to spread people out, both in learning environments and for gatherings and events, where possible.
- Limit and, whenever possible, avoid face-to-face seating arrangements
- Different common space, classroom, and learning environment configurations (e.g., different desk and table formations).
- Regular learning activities that bring together multiple classes (e.g., examinations, physical education) should be spread out across multiple locations/spaces whenever possible, but do not need to be reduced in size.
- Implement strategies that prevent crowding at pick-up and drop-off times.
 - ✓ Focus on entry and exit areas, and other places where people may gather or crowd.
- Stagger recess/snack, lunch, and transition times to provide a greater amount of space for everyone.
- Take students outside more often, where and when possible.
- Manage flow of people in common areas, including hallways, to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through.
 - ✓ Use floor markings and posters to address traffic flow throughout the school. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. It is important not to reduce the number of exits and ensure the fire code is adhered to.

8. Staff Only Spaces

Transmission between adults within the school environment is also an important transmission route to control in the school environment. In non-school workplaces (such as the Central Office), in accordance with WorkSafeBC Guidelines and will be followed by Staff who work at these locations. These plans will be reviewed regularly to ensure their continued effectiveness. Within these spaces, WorkSafeBC Guidelines should be used to determine what measures should be in place. Within non-student areas within schools, additional precautions may be put in place including:

- Rules and procedures to prevent crowding at gathering areas (such as the break room or photocopier)
- Occupancy limits

- Hold staff-only gatherings (e.g., staff meetings, in-service and professional development activities) virtually.

9. School Gatherings and Events

School gatherings and events can occur in line with those permitted by all applicable public health orders and recommendations. If planning an event with more than a single class, school/program administration must be consulted.

Organizers will apply a trauma-informed lens to their planning, including consideration of:

- respecting student and staff comfort levels regarding personal space;
- using space available to spread people out as much as possible, respecting room occupancy limits, and ensuring enough space is available to prevent involuntarily physical contact between attendees (e.g., overcrowding); and

Examinations or assessments are not considered school gatherings; however, they must still follow all normal requirements.

10. Personal Items

Staff and students can continue to bring personal items, but they should be encouraged to not share items that come in contact with the mouth (e.g. food, drinks, unwashed utensils, wind instruments). As needed, NCSS will implement strategies to manage the flow of students around hallways to minimize crowding and allow for ease of people passing through. These can include:

- Uni-directional hallways.
- Staggered release times where feasible
- Encouraging students to not loiter in hallways

11. Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities

NCSS is committed to accommodating our students with disabilities or diverse abilities and will work with families to ensure that students have access to learning supports. Parents/Caregivers of students with disabilities/diverse abilities are encouraged to contact their school administrator to discuss available options for their child (including ensuring appropriate preventative measures are in place).

12. Guidelines for Staff Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities

Where Physical Contact may be required, supporting students with disabilities/diverse abilities may require staff providing support services to be in close physical proximity or in physical contact with a student.

When staff are working with a student indoors, additional personal protective equipment is not required beyond that used as part of the personal care routine normally encountered in their regular course of work (e.g., gloves for toileting). Staff may choose to wear additional protective

equipment, depending upon their own personal choice. When working with students where seeing facial expressions and/or lip movement is important, options include having the staff member wear a mask with a transparent section to enable visualization of the mouth.

13. Student Transportation

Buses

All students riding the bus will be assigned a seat. Students will spread out within the bus when empty spaces are available. Whenever weather permits, windows will be open to allow for increased ventilation of the bus.

Due to the fact that NCSS contracts bus services from various carriers, students may be required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering on school buses. Students should clean their hands before they take the bus. Where possible, bus line up areas should be set up to prevent crowding and students should put on their masks prior to boarding the bus.

Carpooling

When staff, students or others carpool as part of NCSS activities, the following protocols should be followed:

- Weather permitting, windows can be opened to increase ventilation
- If the weather is poor, the vehicle's ventilation should be turned on and set to bring in fresh outside air. Do not use air recirculation
- Travel with the same people whenever possible
- Spread out within the vehicle as much as possible
- All vehicle occupants should wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after trips
- Clean frequently touched surfaces within the vehicle regularly

NCSS encourages families and staff who carpool outside of school hours to follow the same protocols where possible.

Other Methods of Transportation

Staff, students or visitors who take mass transit (such as BC Transit buses or any of the inland ferries) should wash their hands following trips and ensure they are following any other safety guidance issued by the transit operator.

14. Cleaning and Disinfecting

Daily cleaning and disinfection are essential to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases from contaminated objects and surfaces

- A daily sanitizing schedule must be created. All sanitizing and disinfectant products used must be recognized by Health Canada's Hard Surface Disinfectants and Hand Sanitizer's list
- Hand Sanitizers, and air purification machine filters must be checked on a weekly basis. All air purifiers must be HEPA grade
- Daily inspection to insure that ventilation and air purification systems are properly functioning

15. Frequency of Cleaning and Disinfecting

We will continue to perform frequent cleaning of all learning and office sites. These include:

- Items used by larger numbers of students and staff, including doorknobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, toilet handles.
- Shared equipment (e.g. computer keyboards and tablets, glassware and testing equipment for science labs, kitchen equipment for culinary programs, sewing machines and sewing equipment for home economic programs, PE/sports equipment, music equipment, etc.)
- Appliances (staff and students can share the use of appliances and other objects, but treat items like microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, photocopiers, or laminators as frequently touched surfaces)
- Service counters (e.g., office service window, library circulation desk) Areas that are not used in a day will not require cleaning.

16. Cleaning of Teaching Materials, Fabrics and Other Materials

When using teaching materials, toys or manipulatives that may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.), they may only be used if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use. Carpets and rugs (e.g. in Preschool and Kindergarten classes) can also be used.

No cleaning or additional hand washing is required when handling:

- Textbooks, papers or other paper-based products;
- Laminated or Glossy Paper-based products (e.g., Children's books or magazines) and;
- Items with plastic covers (DVDs)

Staff or students doing laundry should ensure hand washing is practiced after loading a laundry machine.

17. Visitors Access

NCCS welcomes visitors and volunteers into all its schools and programs provided that the visitor:

- Checks-in with the office or reception
- Is there for school-based purposes

- Follows all required communicable disease and other mandated protocols

NCSS' facilities may operate as a 'locked' facility. This is determined on a local basis. The reason for the 'locked' facility can be due to:

- school/program safety measures for staff and students
- awareness of those within the building(s) at any given time
- vandalism reduction strategy

NCSS will follow local and provincial health guidelines when it comes to the operation of facilities. As requirements change, NCSS may have to implement protocols such as:

- Wearing of mask
- Limiting of guests and visitors
- Moving meetings to a virtual platform

18. Community Use

After hours community use of facilities is permitted in alignment with other health and safety measures. School/ Program administrator will ensure that community groups have a communicable disease plan in place that ensures:

- Diligent hand hygiene
- Respiratory etiquette
- Ensuring participants stay home if they are feeling ill
- Where possible, limiting building access to only those areas required for the purpose of the activity community users are responsible for collecting names and contact information of participants to support contact tracing activities by the local health authority

19. Illness & Self-Assessment Policies and Protocols (Daily Health Checks)

Parents and caregivers should assess their children daily for illness before sending them to school or a learning centre program. If a staff member or student is demonstrating illness symptoms, they need to stay home rest and get well before returning. It is critical that ill staff and students do not enter NCSS facilities.

For students demonstrating ill symptoms at school, parents will be contacted to pick-up the student as soon as possible. For staff and students who become ill at school, it is important that they remove themselves from regular daily activities, until they can return home.

For COVID-19

Parents, caregivers and students can utilize the provincial Health Check app (<https://covidcheck.gov.bc.ca/>) for daily assessment of symptoms for COVID-19.

NCSS has COVID-19 rapid test kits that can be provided to staff, families and students for free (a postage charge may be issued if the tests need to be mailed).

If a student, staff, or other adult is required to self-isolate they must stay home and should not enter any NCSS site.

20. Staff Responsibilities

- Ensure staff and other adults stay home if they are sick.
- Clearly communicate with parents/caregivers their responsibility to keep their child(ren) home from school if they are sick.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who become sick while at school/work to be sent home as soon as possible.
 - o Some students or staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, schools should have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and is separated from others (at least 2M) and provide the student or staff with a nonmedical mask if (unless they are experiencing gastrointestinal symptoms and are at risk of vomiting).
 - o Schools must provide adequate supervision for all students. Supervising staff should wear a non-medical mask and/or face shield if they are unable to maintain physical distance, avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible, and practice diligent hand hygiene.
 - o Staff responsible for facility cleaning should clean and disinfect the surfaces/equipment which they have been in contact with while they were ill (e.g., their desk in a classroom, the bathroom stall they used, etc.) prior to the surfaces/equipment being used by others.

NCSS does not require a health-care provider note (e.g., a status of any individual) for staff or students, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practices.

21. Symptoms of Illness and Return to School/Work

Students, staff, or other adults should stay at home when sick, as this is one of the most important ways to reduce the introduction to and the spread of communicable diseases.

We encourage any staff member or student with communicable disease symptoms, such as COVID-19, to be tested as soon as possible. NCSS has rapid tests that can be provided to staff and students at no cost.

Students and staff who experience symptoms consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) can continue to attend school when they are experiencing these symptoms as normal. If they experience any new or unexplained symptoms, they should seek assessment by a healthcare provider.

Students, staff, and other adults should follow public health guidance, BCCDC guidance, and/or the recommendation of their health care provider when they are sick

Health-care provider notes (i.e., a doctor's note) are not required to confirm the health status of any individual.

22. Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Rigorous handwashing with soap and water is the most effective way to reduce the spread of illness. NCSS schools/programs will encourage students to make use of handwashing facilities and will promote the importance of this activity with signage and posters.

To be effective, hand should be washed for at least 20 seconds with soap and water. Staff and students should make frequent use of handwashing facilities where available. Hand sanitizer should only be used in areas where hand washing is not readily available. Hand Sanitizer should not be used when hands are visibly dirty.

When to Perform Hand Hygiene:

- A. When Students Should Perform Hand Hygiene:
- When they arrive at school and before they go home
 - Before and after any breaks (e.g., recess, lunch)
 - Between different learning environments (e.g., outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom)
 - Before and after eating and drinking
 - After using the bathroom
 - After handling common resources/equipment/supplies or pets.
 - After sneezing or coughing into hands
 - Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- B. When Staff Should Perform Hand Hygiene:
- When they arrive at school and before they go home
 - Before and after any breaks (e.g., recess, lunch)
 - Between different learning environments
 - (e.g., outdoor-indoor transitions, from the gym to the classroom)
 - Before and after eating and drinking
 - Before and after handling food or assisting students with eating.
 - Before and after giving medication to a student or self
 - After using the bathroom
 - After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood)
 - After cleaning tasks
 - After removing gloves
 - After handling garbage
 - Whenever hands are visibly dirty

Respiratory Etiquette Control of coughs and sneezes is also an important tool in preventing the spread of communicable diseases. Staff and students should cough or sneeze into their elbow, sleeve or tissue and direct coughs and sneezes away from individuals wherever possible. Following a sneeze or cough, any tissue should be thrown away and hands should be washed.

23. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and COVID-19

Personal protective equipment (including masks) can provide an additional layer of protection. Non-medical masks and face coverings (hereafter referred to collectively as “masks”) have a role to play in preventing the spread of COVID-19. They provide some protection to the wearer and to those around them. Medical grade masks are not required within school settings for general use. Face shields should not be worn in place of non-medical masks. In the event of a Public Health Order that requires stricter non-medical mask use than is indicated in the Ministry of Education guidelines, NCSS will follow the public health order.

Masks should not be used in the place of other safety protocols and individuals should still respect others personal space. If required, staff should utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in the use of masks and should not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature. Posters will be put up to direct students and staff in how to wear masks.

The wearing of masks in all NCSS schools and programs is currently by personal choice. At NCSS we respect this personal choice.

24. Exemptions for Staff, Students and Visitors in the Event Masks are Mandated

When/if mandated by a public health order, mask requirements do not apply in the following circumstances:

- to a person who cannot tolerate wearing a mask for documented health or behavioral reasons.
- to a person who is unable to put on or remove a mask without the assistance of another person.
- if the mask is removed temporarily for the purposes of identifying the person wearing it.
- if the mask is removed temporarily to engage in an educational activity that cannot be performed while wearing a mask (e.g., playing a wind instrument, engaging in high intensity physical activity, etc.);
- if a person is eating or drinking.
- if a person is behind a barrier; or
- while providing a service to a person with a disability or diverse ability (including but not limited to a hearing impairment) where visual cues, facial expressions and/or lip reading/movements is important. If a staff, student, or visitor is unable to wear a mask, other controls should remain in place.

25. General Ventilation and Air Circulation

NCSS aims to mitigate any potential risks by implementing the following ventilation practices:

- Providing air purifiers for all instructional and office spaces. Purifier filters are changed every 6 months or sooner depending upon manufacturer recommendations

- If using portable fans or air conditioning units, ensure they are set up to move air downward and not blowing air directly from one person's breathing zone to other occupants of a room. Avoid horizontal cross breezes
- Having HVAC systems inspected and serviced on a regular basis
- Keeping exterior windows open as much as possible for natural air flow
- Providing portable air conditioner units with ventilation capacities to learning and office spaces

26. Emergency and Evacuation Drills

It is critical that emergency and evacuation drills continue as required by the Ministry of Education. School/program administrators will continue to conduct fire drills, lockdown drills and other emergency drills. Administrators will ensure that muster points for emergency drills are also spaced to ensure that classes make use of the space available to them to muster.

27. Communication and Training/Orientation

NCSS is committed to assisting Interior Health Regional Medical Health Officers and the Provincial Health Officer (PHO) in communicating out guidance, recommendations, and orders. NCSS will also continue to communicate to staff and parents about changes to Communicable Disease protocols using various means including:

- Emails,
- Letters,
- School and district websites,
- Staff meetings,
- ParentSquare Portal, and
- Orientations

All staff participate in a Communicable Disease orientation training prior to the return of students in September. Regular Communicable Disease updates are part of every staff meeting within schools/programs in our society.

School/program administrators should ensure all staff know how to report health and safety concerns and understand the protocols in place to keep them safe.

28. Curriculum, Programs and Activities

All curriculum, programs and activities should operate in alignment with Provincial **COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings** (http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf) , including school-led activities held off campus (e.g., sports academies, community-based programs/courses). Schools/programs should continue to implement ongoing communicable disease prevention practices (e.g., cleaning and disinfecting, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette) specific to the activity.

In general, these practices should include:

- cleaning/disinfecting equipment,
- hand hygiene practices specific to the activity,
- reducing the number of close face-to-face interactions

For more information on course specific guidelines please see the **Provincial COVID-19 Communicable Disease Guidelines for K-12 Settings**

(http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Info-Site/Documents/COVID_public_guidance/Guidance-k-12-schools.pdf) .

29. Densities and Capacities

NCSS follows Interior Health and Ministry of Education guidelines on capacities and densities for office, classroom, hallway, and assembly spaces. As much as possible NCSS strives to keep densities and capacities as low as possible – in spaces where staff and students spend longer sustained periods of time.

In indoor spaces, people have enough room to carry out intended activities without involuntary physical contact. Spaces are configured to maximize space between people.

30. Outdoor Spaces and Playgrounds

Due to the low transmission rates in outdoor spaces, NCSS encourages the use of outdoor spaces for:

- Student classes and activities
- Staff activities
- Staff and student lunches
- Student free time and recesses

31. Field Trips

Field Trips and off-site group activities need to adhere to the following protocols:

- Administration must approve each field trip as per previous protocols, however in this approval Administration must weigh the Communicable Disease risks of each trip
- All staff and volunteers must be trained on safety protocols and procedures prior to the field trip occurring

32. School Closures

It is the intent of NCSS to keep programs and schools operating as per the planned school/program year. However, a school may be temporarily closed in the following situations:

1. **Health closure** of a school, which is determined by the local health authority due to the Communicable Disease case count in, or related to, a school.

2. **Functional closure** of a school, which is determined by the school or school district due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high absenteeism of all staff or certain employees required for a school to function and the inability to replace those absences.
3. **Transportation Closure**, which is due to a lack of staff to be able to provide the required level of transportation services for students. This would likely be due the absenteeism of bus drivers and/or mechanics and the inability to replace those absences.
4. **Weather Closure**, inclement weather does not permit safe travels to/from the school and/or safe operations of the school facility.

33. Contingency Plans and Online Learning

Each brick-and-mortar program within NCSS must develop a contingency plan that addresses absenteeism and operations. If absenteeism deems it necessary to operate remotely or online learning, a brick-and-mortar program may implement such a program to provide continuance of learning. Remote or online learning within a brick-and-mortar school/program is intended to be short- term and does not take the place of our Online Learning school, CHEK ABC. The transition of a program to remote or online learning may also be at the directive of the Ministry of Education or Ministry of Health.

34. Appendix A: Safe Work Procedures

Isolation of Ill Students

Purpose:

This safe work procedure establishes how to safely move a student to the designated sick area if they become ill.

Steps:

1. If a student becomes ill escort the student to the isolation room. Ensure the student is supervised until picked up. The staff member may choose to put on a mask and/or other PPE.
3. Inform the Administrator on site.
4. Collect the student's personal items.
5. The Administrator on site will phone the parent/guardian or emergency contact and have them pick up their child. Note the time the child was picked up.
6. After the child has left, close the door to the isolation room (area), and do not allow anyone entrance to the room.
7. A complete cleaning of the space must be conducted before it can be used again.

Procedure for Ill Staff

Purpose:

This safe work procedure establishes how staff should leave the school/site if they begin to develop symptoms while at work.

Steps:

1. Inform/text the Administrator/your supervisor immediately. It is recommended that you put on a mask.
2. If unable to immediately leave the site, symptomatic staff should separate themselves into an area away from others to wait until they are able to leave the site. Otherwise, staff should leave the site and head home.
3. Once symptomatic staff leaves the site, the area they waited in should be cleaned and disinfected.
4. Once the staff member leaves the site, clean and disinfect any areas they were in.