



2021-2022 MHPSD School Plan

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This document addresses actions required to safely address COVID-19 in schools.

The safety and well-being of our students, families and staff is a priority as we return to school.

We are **MHPSDfamilySTRONG**

To Our Families and Community,

We are excited to welcome the 7000 students and more than 800 employees of Medicine Hat Public School Division back after the winter break. We look forward to watching our students achieve great things as they and their teachers work and learn together. We look forward to the return of laughter and play to our classrooms, staff rooms, hallways and playing fields. We can't wait to get going again.

During the Winter Break the Minister of Education announced a delayed return to school. This delay was intended to provide school jurisdictions to prepare for the challenges associated with the Omicron variant of COVID-19. The revisions made to this document reflect MHPSD's ongoing commitment to implementing the recommendations of government to mitigate the spread of the virus and to keep our schools open. To mitigate the spread and help everyone stay safe, we continue to enforce measures like regular hand washing, wearing masks, staying home when sick, and extra cleaning. To prepare for opening schools on January 10 the government published [Guidance for Schools \(k-12\) and School Busses](#).

As with prior versions of this plan we have sought to balance the need to protect our students with the need for them to play and learn in an environment that is welcoming. We will monitor information that is available to us and shift our plan as needed. Our goals are to have our schools stay safe, provide high quality learning, and to have minimal disruptions to learning. However, it is expected that the next few months will produce significant challenges due to high levels of staff and student absence. While we are making every effort to avoid disruptions to face-to-face learning, our community must know that some challenges cannot be overcome by will alone. Your patience and understanding are appreciated.

Guiding Principles for Re-entry:

1. The safety and well-being of students and staff is **the TOP** priority.
2. High quality teaching and learning will be supported through sound inclusion practices, flexible learning environments, and high value professional learning.
3. Protect families and our community from disruptions to learning.

As you read what is written below, we ask that you keep in mind all that we have done and learned through the course of the global pandemic. We have learned that we can both keep our students and staff safe and provide fun and warm learning environments. We have learned that, while we may disagree on some things, we can all agree that our kids and teachers can accomplish great things. Finally, we have learned that plans need to be made to change, and we will do just that as the circumstances change.

Be Well,

Catherine Wilson
Board Chair

Mark Davidson
Superintendent

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“Routine public health practices can minimize transmission of respiratory infections, including COVID-19, influenza and common colds. These practices include: proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, maintaining ventilation, staying home when sick and getting vaccinated.” *Guidance for Respiratory Illness Prevention and Management in Schools*

HEALTH MEASURES

DAILY SCREENING PRACTICES

Each day, before leaving home, staff, students, visitors, and volunteers who will access the school for work or education, must **self-screen** for COVID-19 symptoms using the applicable checklist for their age group by completing the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#). Parents can follow the [Student Isolation Requirements Flow Chart](#) (see appendix b) to help make their decisions. Members of the school community are committed to working to ensure that no one enters a school building with COVID-19 symptoms.

- Anyone that reports symptoms should stay home, seek appropriate health care advice and complete the [AHS Online Assessment Tool](#).
- Schools must keep records of student’s known pre-existing conditions. If the nature of the pre-existing condition changes (e.g., a cough worsens) students should remain home until the symptoms resolve or they are confirmed as connected to their allergy.

RAPID TESTS

The province will be providing rapid test kits to all students and staff. Parents may choose to use these tests at home. Use of the kits is voluntary. **Rapid tests will NOT be administered in school. School staff will NOT administer a rapid test to a student at any time.**

A [how-to video and a rapid test program fact sheet](#) translated into multiple languages offers tips on how to use the rapid test kits.

AHS recommends that rapid tests are used twice per week, 72 hours apart (i.e., Sunday and Wednesday or Monday and Thursday). There is no requirement to report a positive rapid test result however families are encouraged to report student absences and expected return dates with their school.

SICKNESS WHILE AT SCHOOL

No individual should enter the school if they have symptoms of COVID-19. Any individual that becomes sick on a school bus or while at school will be required to wear a mask immediately. They will be directed to an isolation space and parents/guardians will be contacted for immediate pick-up.

- [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)

Any individual that is sent home due to the onset of COVID-19 symptoms is asked to follow:

- [AHS Isolation Requirements](#)
- [Guidance for Parents of Children Attending School, Childcare or Camps](#)

CONFIRMED CASES OF COVID-19

AHS is no longer directly monitoring positive COVID-19 cases in schools. Quarantine is not required for close contacts; classes will not be required to quarantine if there is a case of COVID-19 at school. Individuals who test positive will be expected to isolate based on [Alberta’s isolation requirements](#).

If families choose to keep their child home to isolate because of a close contact (either in school or outside of school), please communicate the child’s expected return date with the school. **We ask that families continue to report absences, please choose one of the following:**

- **Absent (Close Contact)** - Your child is isolating because they are a close contact (either at school or away from school). Please share your expected return date with the school.
- **Absent (Health)** - Child is sick with symptoms that are NOT related to COVID-19
- **Absent (COVID-19 Positive/Symptomatic)** - While families are encouraged to report a positive COVID-19 case, it is not required. Use this code if your child is COVID positive. **Note: If you attempt to enter a COVID related absence in the SchoolMessenger app and don't see the new attendance codes please log out of the app and log back in. Once you log back into the app, you will see the new attendance codes. Please contact your child's school if you need more assistance with this.**

Personal medical information that is disclosed to the school will be held in confidence and not shared.

Proof of a negative COVID-19 test result is not necessary for a student, teacher, or staff member to return to school.

Teachers will continue to educate students in their classrooms and will ensure that learning materials and assignments are available on google classroom, so students that are isolating at home can follow along. Unfortunately, with the shift away from test, trace and isolate, we do not have the capacity to guarantee both face to face and live, online instruction in the same way we did last year.

High School Students: In the quarter system, if students choose to isolate and spend multiple days away from the classroom it will have a significant impact on learning. Face to face learning is the best option for students and we recommend coming to school whenever possible.

Schools will continue to share data by reporting absence rates that are due to respiratory or gastrointestinal illness to AHS. MHPSD will work with AHS if there is an outbreak of any notifiable illness, including COVID-19

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

MASKS

[CMOH Order 55-2021](#) requires that masks be worn at all times while in common spaces in a school building. The most recent document “strongly recommends” masking at all times while in school, except for during physical education, when outside and while actively engaged in eating. In some, limited, circumstances staff will direct the removal of masks with the implementation of additional mitigation strategies. We have accepted the governments strong recommendation; staff and students in K-12 are required to properly wear masks at all times while on school buses when inside MHPSD schools and properties.

At MHPSD students will be required to mask in the following ways:

- **Students in kindergarten through grade 12** will be required to wear masks on school busses and in all indoor settings.
- Masks may be removed during physical education, when eating, and when outside. If the space allows for distance, masks may be removed during performance classes (band, music, etc.).
- **Students in ELP** will be required to wear a mask on school busses but will **not** be required to wear masks during the school day. Parents may choose to send their children to school wearing a mask at their discretion. If directed by AHS public

health, ELP students may be required to mask.

- **All students and staff will be required to wear a mask if they become symptomatic at school.**
- All guests and visitors to MHPSD building must wear an appropriate mask. MHPSD will not permit mask exemptions for guests or visitors, anyone that is not able to wear a mask can attend a meeting virtually.

Medical grade masks are being provided by the province to all students and staff. There is no requirement to use medical grade masks however they are strongly recommended. These masks will be sent home so that students may arrive at school, or to their bus, wearing them. Masks will be retained at schools to provide a change of mask halfway through the day.

Plastic face shields are not a substitute for a mask from a safety perspective. A mask must still be worn while wearing a face shield. Face shields may be worn in addition to a mask, at the discretion of the individual.

Transparent masks: School administrators should develop a plan to ensure that students who are hearing impaired or rely on facial cues are able to communicate with others in areas where masks are being worn, or have their educational needs met when teachers are wearing masks in the classroom. This may include the use of transparent masks; it is important that transparent masks cover the nose and mouth, as well as fit securely against the face.

Mask exemptions: Some individuals may be exempt from wearing masks in MHPSD schools and while riding on school busses due to a medical condition. In such cases, alternative measures such as face shields, greater physical distancing, barriers, cohorts, frequent hand hygiene, and other infection prevention and control measures will need to be considered. We expect all staff and

students to be respectful of those who wear masks and those who cannot wear a mask.

Any student or staff that are unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition must inform the school principal/manager as soon as possible so that feasible alternative accommodations or arrangements can be considered. Any student mask exemption that was granted in 2020-2021 will remain valid. All mask exemptions and accommodation measures must be documented.

VACCINATION

Having up to date COVID-19 vaccination status is an essential strategy to keep each other safe. Currently, vaccines are available for all Albertans 5 and older. All Albertans are encouraged to book a vaccination with [AHS or with a pharmacy](#).

The province does not require proof of vaccination to attend school in Alberta. For more information about vaccination policies and requirements, contact [AHS](#).

When assessing accommodations for a mask exemption, principals/managers will consider the needs of the person that requires a mask exemption, as well as the medical/health and safety needs of students, families and staff who are at high risk for COVID-19.

At all grade levels, principals may grant an exemption based on an Alberta Education code.

K-3 student mask exemption requests can be managed at the school level. If, after consultation with parents and teachers, it is determined that a child is unable to wear a mask effectively, the school principal may grant an exemption without an authorized medical letter. Otherwise, a medical note for mask exemption must be provided by an authorized health care professional. Grades 4 – 12 mask exemptions, other than those issued due to Alberta Education Code (see above), require a letter defined in Appendix A.

Mask exemption requests for staff must be addressed in consultation with HR.

When will mandatory masking end in schools?

Masks are mandatory in schools by public health order. If mandatory mask requirement is rescinded in Alberta the Board will use the following variables to make decisions regarding mask requirements:

- The province government, in the past, used the threshold of 50 cases per 100 000 to determine whether to initiate enhanced restrictions related to COVID-19. For the city of Medicine Hat, the equivalent number is 34 active cases. Unless mandated otherwise, **when we reach 33 active cases or lower, and AHS identifies a downward trend in the data, MHPSD will shift to the minimum guidelines provided by the provincial government.** (Note: If AHS identifies a sustained trend at or above 34 active cases then we will reinstate masking in schools.)

STUDENT GROUPINGS/COHORTS

A [cohort](#) is a group of students/staff who remain together throughout the school day.

Kindergarten through grade 6: Division schools will group kindergarten through grade 6 students together in their respective cohorts as a safety strategy, a student's assigned class will be considered their cohort.

Cohorting should be maintained during activities outside the classroom, such as recess and lunch breaks. If students from two different cohorts wish to socialize, they should remain 2 metres apart.

- If two or more people from different cohorts are required to come within 2 metres of one another for the purposes of instruction, practice or undertaking examinations, additional protections should be instituted. Consider using engineering controls such as plexiglass barriers or partitions that extend across

breathing zones and are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected between users, or administrative controls such as adapting the activity to minimize or eliminate close contacts.

- Teachers who regularly interact within 2 metres of students in their class are considered part of the cohort. If teachers interact with more than one group of students without distancing, they are part of multiple cohorts.
- As much as operationally possible, limit the number of classroom cohorts that teachers belong to.
- If a teacher or staff member does not interact within 2 metres of students in their classes, they would not be considered part of the cohort.
- Teachers/staff should not be in a cohort with each other unless it is required for operational purposes. (i.e., a teacher and a teacher's assistant who work with the same classroom cohort).

Grades 7 - 12: Middle schools and high schools cannot reasonably cohort while offering a full range of programming.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Schools will continue to promote physical distancing.

STUDENTS ENTERING/EXITING THE SCHOOL

Schools have designated entrances and exits to support cohorts and distancing.

Parent pickup/drop off: Schools have developed procedures for drop-off/pick-up that support cohorts and distancing:

- Parents are encouraged to transport their children to and from school whenever possible (as opposed to relying on school bus transportation). Parents are welcome to walk their children to the entry/exit door and are asked to maintain physical distance. Parents should not enter the school during drop off and pick up

times unless they are attending an appointment.

- Where appropriate, students are encouraged to ride their bikes or walk to school to avoid bus transport and alleviate vehicle congestion at schools.

End of day procedure: Schools have plans to address students exiting the school safely, with appropriate supervision, maximizing the number of exit doors, while attempting to meet physical distancing guidelines. During inclement weather, the principal will make alternate arrangements for outdoor waiting areas.

QUARTER SYSTEM

To limit the number of transitions and opportunities for interaction during the school day, we will continue with the quarter system at MHHS and CHHS. Quarter start dates: January 31 and April 13.

PROHIBITED EVENTS

To reduce interactions between cohorts, multi-classroom/cohort gatherings such as assemblies, whole grade, or whole school groupings are not permitted at this time. Virtual assemblies are encouraged.

WATER FOUNTAINS, WATER BOTTLES

Water fountains remain open. Knobs and push buttons are considered high-touch surfaces and will be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Students are encouraged to bring their own water bottles. Touchless water bottle filling stations are available in all schools.

CLEANING

Custodial staff are engaged in more frequent cleaning. Daytime custodians regularly clean high touch surfaces and high traffic areas.

Hand hygiene and disinfecting in schools:

Teachers will emphasize appropriate hand and respiratory hygiene. In addition to classroom sinks, hand sanitizer will be available at every building and classroom entrance throughout the school and hand hygiene will be performed regularly including when entering and exiting the school and

classrooms, and before and after eating. Students will be continually reminded of respiratory etiquette by staff and age-appropriate school signage.

VENTILATION

Proper ventilation and airflow are one of the many ways we maintain safe learning spaces for staff and students.

In our schools we:

- use high grade filters
- change filters regularly
- maximize airflow and fresh air intake
- extend the running time for mechanical systems
- inspect mechanical systems on an ongoing basis

All MHPSD buildings have mechanical systems that allow for fresh air intake. When the weather allows, we encourage schools to open classroom windows and use outdoor learning spaces.

COMMUNITY USE OF MHPSD SPACES

Joint Use Agreements are permitted to continue to support activities for children and youth. All other joint use is suspended. Principals are not authorized to provide community access to these spaces.

SHARED SCHOOL SPACES

Learning commons, gymnasiums, and gathering areas remain available for instructional use while maximizing physical distancing. Fitness centres and gymnasiums are only to be used for educational purposes and extracurricular activities, with an emphasis on maintaining physical distancing.

ISOLATION SPACES

Each school has an isolation space dedicated to individuals that develop or arrive with, symptoms of COVID-19. The isolation space is stocked with appropriate supplies and personal protective equipment.

VISITORS/PARENT/VOLUNTEERS & SERVICE PROVIDERS

In accordance with [MHSD Policy 546](#) all persons over the age of 12 are required to provide proof of vaccination or proof of a negative rapid test result

in order to enter all Division facilities. A self-test completed offsite or self-produced documentation of a negative test result is not valid. This requirement does not apply to students attending school or regular curriculum events.

Authorized visitors include delivery personnel, MHPSD itinerant staff and contractors, substitute staff, student teachers, service providers, Medicine Hat Police Service, educational guest presenters, emergency response personnel and AHS.

At the discretion of the principal; parents/guardians and community volunteers are permitted in schools if they are regularly volunteering to support instruction.

Walk-in/Impromptu Visitors

Access to MHPSD schools and facilities is by appointment only. All visitors must call ahead and make an appointment prior to arriving at a school or facility. Parents/guardians are not permitted in schools to pick up and drop off students until further notice.

All MHPSD facilities are required to keep a visitor log. All visitors that will be inside the building for more than five minutes are required to sign in on the visitor logbook.

- Visitors are required to complete the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) before they enter the school.
- All visitor movement in the school will be limited to only necessary areas.
- Any visitor that enters an MHPSD building will be required to wear a mask; mask exemptions will not be accepted. Any visitor that is not able to wear a mask may meet with school staff virtually.

RECESS

Schools will develop a coordinated exit/entry schedule utilizing as many exit/entry doors as possible for cohorts to go outside for recess and safely return to their learning space. Students and staff will be expected to sanitize before exiting and when re-entering the building. Recess breaks may

be staggered by the schools to reduce congestion when students are exiting and entering the school.

CLASS TRANSITIONS/BREAKS

In most cases, middle school teachers will move to students rather than students moving classrooms.

EDUCATIONAL EXCURSIONS/FIELD TRIPS

Excursions to outdoor destinations are permitted. Distancing between cohorts is expected.

Excursions to indoor settings may continue so long as cohorts travel separately and, while in attendance at the destination, do not mix. The site receiving our students must provide assurance that their staff meet the expectations of MHPSD Policy 546.

EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Sports: Athletic games and practices are permitted, as is league play. Spectator attendance **is not permitted** at this time.

Clubs: School clubs are permitted.

PERFORMING ARTS

Singing & vocal performance, dance and live instrumental music are permitted as part of the educational curriculum, within the following limitations:

- Maintain 2 metres physical distancing between participating students, where possible.
- Singers and wind instrument musicians should keep 2 metres away from other performers and individuals at all times.
- Wind instruments should be equipped with a cover intended to prevent droplet transmission.
- In indoor settings, groups should not sing or play wind instruments for more than 30 minutes at a time, with a 10-minute break afterwards to allow for air exchange in the room.
- When performance activities involve singing, all singers, including students in kindergarten through grade 3, are strongly

encouraged to wear masks when singing indoors.

- As singing is a higher risk activity, students who have an exception to masking can be provided with another musical part (e.g., percussion) or if the child will be singing, they should be alone in a dedicated space or room (e.g., a different classroom, using a virtual video participation option).
- Students are permitted to participate in an extracurricular performance activity following the CMOH orders for general youth performance activities.
 - Audiences and spectators are **not permitted** at this time.

SCHOOL COUNCILS

School councils are encouraged to meet virtually. If meetings occur in person, they must be outside of regular school hours, all attendees must be masked and follow general safety protocols such as hand sanitizer use, meeting size, physical distancing, cleaning, and disinfecting surfaces, etc. The space used for the meeting is to be disinfected before and after.

FOOD IN SCHOOLS

Eating Lunch: Common lunchroom areas may be utilized. No food sharing or self-serve/family-style meals are permitted for staff or students. Students must not share utensils, dishes, and water bottles or drink containers. Students will be asked to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer before and after eating.

Students are expected to adhere to mask guidelines unless eating. Lunchroom areas may be utilized but must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Where staggering isn't possible schools should create additional lunchroom spaces to allow for distancing. Access to common spaces such as cafeterias will be permitted. High school students will be permitted to leave campus at lunch and are encouraged to eat and socialize outside.

Parent provided food: Parents may be permitted to provide prepackaged foods at the principal's discretion.

School cafeteria curricular program and culinary arts: Schools with full cafeteria, concessions, cafes, stores, and/or programs that handle and prepare foods are permitted to operate. Student prepared food may not be shared outside of a classroom. Meal service times may be staggered to reduce the number of people eating together at one time. Other areas of the school can be adapted to serve as additional eating space. Staff and students will practice physical distancing guidelines while eating lunch to the best of their ability. All the limitations above apply to cafeteria services.

Hot Lunch Program: Hot lunch programs are permitted if meals are commercially prepared and individually served.

LOCKERS

Lockers will remain available for student use.

WASHROOMS

Students and staff will have regular access to washrooms. Washrooms will be cleaned and disinfected regularly, students and staff are expected to practice proper hand hygiene after use. Signage will be posted about good hand washing practices and physical distancing.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

The YMCA and Crayon Academy are operating Before and After School Care in our schools and will follow their own COVID-19 protocols.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

We will work with the City of Medicine Hat Fire and Rescue and Medicine Hat Police Service to ensure that emergency drills (such as fire and hour zero drills) reflect COVID-19 safe protocols.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

MHPD encourages families, where possible, to drive their children to school or have them walk or ride their bike

- Students in ELP, K and grades 1-12 are required to wear a mask unless they have an exemption.
- Parents and children/students should not be in the pick-up area or enter the bus if

they have symptoms of COVID-19. Drivers will be provided with a protective zone.

- Our service provider, Southland Transportation, will provide clear expectations to families around school bus behavior.
- Students will be assigned seats and a record of this seating plan will be maintained. Students who live in the same household may be seated together. Student rider attendance will be recorded.
- Schools will develop procedures for student loading, unloading and transfers that support physical distancing when possible.
- If a student becomes ill or presents COVID-19 symptoms en route to school, upon arrival, the student will move directly to the isolation space and arrangements will be made for pick up. If a child becomes symptomatic while waiting for the bus, unless the parent is present, no student will be denied access onto the bus.
- If a driver becomes aware of a child that is symptomatic after school, the child will not be permitted access onto the bus. The driver will communicate with the school to get the child home safely and as soon as possible.
- Busses will be sanitized after every trip to prepare for the next cohort.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

International student programs will operate.

LEARNING

SHIFTING TO AT-HOME LEARNING

Within Alberta Education's plan school jurisdictions may shift an individual class or grade level to at-home learning based on the level of absence among students and the availability of qualified staff. The decision to shift an entire school to at-home learning rests with the Minister of Education, in consultation with school jurisdictions.

We will make every effort to ensure that the decision to shift to at-home learning is communicated with as much advance notice as possible, however advanced notice may not always be an option. It is very possible that we will have circumstances where a staff member must leave due to the onset of illness, and we have no qualified replacement. In these limited circumstances, we may need to engage a fan-out to send classes home. We are prioritizing our teaching resources for younger grades in the hopes of avoiding the need to send them home.

It is critical that families begin to consider what they might do if this circumstance arises.

If a shift to at-home learning occurs, your child's teacher/school will communicate, as soon as possible, direction regarding the start-up of at-home learning. We remain committed to the effective use of Google Classroom/Edsby to support learning. As has been the case for nearly two years, schools will support families who do not have a device to support on-line learning. Families are asked to contact their child's school to sign out a device.

MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

"It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another." Margaret Wheatley – 2004

Social and emotional learning is always critical to engaging students, supporting adults, building relationships, and creating a foundation for academic learning. We are mindful of the challenges that the pandemic has created for the children we serve. School leaders will engage with teachers, school staff, families, youth, and community partners to develop supportive learning environments where students and adults can enhance their social and emotional skills, feel a sense of belonging, heal, and thrive. AB Education has also incorporated wellness outcomes for the kindergarten through grade 9 curriculum with a focus on physical and mental health. High school students continue to be

required to take physical education and CALM (which includes information about mental health) as part of their graduation requirements. Additionally, MHPSD has dramatically increased investment in the people who provide social/emotional supports in our schools, having hired additional Family School Liaison Workers and Success Coaches who work closely with teachers, students, and families.

We encourage families to visit the [MHPSD Family Resources](#) page to learn about supports that are available.

Find more mental health supports for students and staff in the [Government of Alberta's 2021–2022 School Year Plan](#)

APPENDIX A – STUDENT MASKING EXEMPTION TEMPLATE

Masks in School

Masks are required in all MHPSD schools and buildings for all students attending Kindergarten through grade 12, staff members, and visitors. Masks are required in all indoor settings.

Masks may be removed during physical education, when eating, and when outside. If the space allows for distance, masks may be removed during performance classes (band, music, etc.). Masks are also not required when:

- Outdoors
- Consuming food or drink in designated areas.
- Engaged in physical exercise.
- Where a person is providing or receiving care or assistance and a mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance.
- A person is separated from every other person by a physical barrier (i.e., in a room alone).

Mask Exemptions

Some individuals may be exempted from wearing masks in MHPSD schools and while riding on school busses. In such cases, alternative measures such as face shields, greater physical distancing, barriers, strict cohorting, frequent hand hygiene, and other infection prevention and control measures will need to be considered.

We expect all staff and students to be respectful of those who wear masks and those who cannot wear a mask.

When assessing accommodations for a mask exemption, principals/managers will consider the needs of the person that requires a mask exemption, as well as the medical/health and safety needs of students, families and staff who are at high risk for COVID-19. It is expected that all reasonable steps and considerations will be taken before a student is not permitted to attend school in person, or an employee is not permitted to attend work in person.

Exemption Process

Anyone unable to wear a mask due to a medical condition must inform the school principal/manager as soon as possible so that feasible alternative accommodations or arrangements can be considered.

At all grade levels, principals may grant an exemption based on an Alberta Education code. K-3 student mask exemption requests can be managed at the school level. If, after consultation with parents and teachers, it is determined that a child is unable to wear a mask effectively, the school principal may grant an exemption without an authorized medical letter. Otherwise, a medical note for mask exemption must be provided by an authorized health care professional (See appendix A). Unless a student has an Alberta Education Code, any student in grades 4-12 who requests a mask exemption must provide a letter as outlined in Appendix A.

Mask accommodation requests for staff must be addressed in consultation with HR.

Any mask exemption that was granted in 2020-2021 will remain valid however accommodation measures may need to be reviewed. All mask exemptions and accommodation measures must be documented.

Principals/managers should follow these guidelines when considering a mask exemption:

- The request for exemption may be granted where a medical certificate for mask exemption has been provided by an authorized health professional.
- Principals/managers should make reasonable inquiries. Could a different type of mask be suitable (disposable vs. non disposable, cloth masks or homemade masks)?
- Consider the configuration of the room. Can a student/staff member physically distance and participate fully in learning and classroom activities?
- Assess the risks of a person without a mask attending at the school or building. Identify any actual or potential health and safety risks to be considered in making reasonable accommodation measures such as students or staff who are medically vulnerable.
- Consider the needs, limitations, and restrictions (what the person can and cannot do) in relation to wearing various types of masks, and alternatives to a mask including a physical barrier, single-layer mask, or other alternatives. Although not a substitute for a mask, a face shield may be an option. Face shields provide limited protection but may be better than no mask at all.
- Students who are deaf, hard of hearing, communicating with a person who is hearing impaired, or whose ability to see the mouth is essential for communication, should use masks designed for these circumstances.
- Individuals who are unable to put on or remove a mask without assistance may be able to do so with guidance or assistance.
- The accommodation process should be carried out in a transparent, communicative, flexible, respectful, and cooperative manner.

Qualifying health conditions for exemptions to masking

- Sensory processing disorders
- Developmental delay
- Cognitive impairment
- Mental illnesses including:
 - anxiety disorders
 - psychotic disorders
 - dissociative identity disorder
 - depressive disorders
- Facial trauma or recent oral maxillofacial surgery
- Contact dermatitis or allergic reactions to mask components
- Clinically significant acute respiratory distress

MEDICAL CERTIFICATE
FOR PERSONS WITH PHYSICAL OR MEDICAL CONDITIONS THAT PREVENT THE
USE OF A NON-MEDICAL MASK OR FACE COVERING

Patient Name: _____

- ☐ I am a licensed Healthcare Provider treating this patient.
- ☐ I certify that this patient has an identified medical condition that requires complete exemption from wearing a non-medical face mask or alternative face covering at any time, under any circumstance as per the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta Standards of Practice.

Is the medical condition permanent? ☐Yes ☐No

- ☐ In my clinical judgement the severity of the patient's condition and the risk that mask wearing might worsen it, outweighs the risk of severe illness from COVID-19 to both the patient and the school community.
- ☐ I certify that this patient is not at higher risk of severe complications from COVID-19 that necessitates avoidance from all settings where physical distancing is not feasible.
- ☐ I accordingly certify that all the information I have provided is complete, true, and accurate to the best of my knowledge.

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER PROFESSIONAL NAME AND DESIGNATION

HEALTHCARE PROVIDER PROFESSIONAL SIGNATURE

DATE

Student Isolation Requirements

Updated 9 Jan 2022



Question 1:

Has your child been a household contact of a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days?

No: Go to Question 2
Yes and they are fully immunized: Go to Question 2

Yes and they are not fully immunized: Your child should stay home and NOT attend school for 14 days from the last date of exposure.

Question 2:

Does your child have any new onset or worsening of the following core symptoms?

Fever
Cough
Shortness of Breath
Loss of Taste or Smell

YES

STOP HERE

If your child is fully immunized they are required to isolate for 5 days from the onset of symptoms or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. They must wear a mask for up to 5 days after their isolation period if outside the home in a public place or in the company of those outside their immediate household.

No: Go to Question 3

OR
If they are NOT fully immunized, they must isolate for 10 days from the onset of symptoms or until symptoms resolve - whichever is longer.

Question 3:

Does your child have any new onset or worsening of the following other symptoms?

Chills
Sore throat/painful swallowing
Runny nose/congestion
Feeling unwell/fatigued
Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea
Unexplained loss of appetite
Muscle/joint aches
Headache
Pink eye

YES

OR
Your child must stay home until symptoms resolve IF they receive a negative PCR COVID-19 test.

OR
Your child must stay home until symptoms resolve IF they receive two negative rapid antigen (at home) tests, within at least 24 hours between tests.

STOP HERE

ONE symptom: Keep your child home for 24 hours and consider administering an at-home rapid test.
TWO symptoms: Keep your child home and use an at-home rapid test or use the **AHS Online Assessment Tool** to determine if testing is recommended.

No: Your child can attend school.

AND
If you test your child: If the test is positive, follow the instructions outlined in Question 2.
If a test is not done: If the ONE symptom is improving after 24 hours, your child can return to school and activities when they feel well enough to do so. *Children with TWO symptoms* must stay home and not return to school. See Question 2 to determine timelines for isolation.

Asymptomatic Rapid Testing

If an at-home test is **negative** your child can return to school as long as they remain asymptomatic. *If they are a close contact of a positive COVID-19 individual, they must follow the instructions listed in Question 1.*
If an at-home test is **positive**, your child is required to isolate and follow the instructions outlined in Question 2.

[Go to the Alberta Health Daily Checklist for Children under 18](#)