

SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 53 (Okanagan Similkameen)

POLICY

No. G-5

Amended: June 25, 2008
Amended: October 23, 2019
Reviewed: April 24, 2024

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE – PROTOCOL WITH HEALTH UNIT

Role of the School District

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 public health providers and the superintendent/principal of the school 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 to Interior Health. The ultimate responsibility for identifying students at risk lies with the Regional Medical Health Officer and their designate. The School District takes direction from them for these types of situations.

Consultation with the designated Regional Medical Health Officer/designate/public health nurse 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, Ministry of Health "Health Files", or a letter for a specific group of students. If a communicable disease is identified and involves significant risk or public interest, the Superintendent will provide the plan and guidelines as discussed and outlined by Public 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.

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REGULATIONS

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Communication Protocol

Previous experience has shown that the following steps are often all taken and completed within a period of 24 hours, depending on the urgency of the case.

The following plan outlines certain recommended actions. It should be noted that the circumstances surrounding each case are unique.

- Step 1** Contact the Superintendent or Designate
Board Office: 250-498-3481
- Step 2** The Superintendent or designate will contact the Regional Medical Health Officer, or designate, regarding the need for activating an action plan.
- Step 3** Each principal should ensure that data regarding 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 dissemination of information quickly.
- Step 4** The principal should assure that the whereabouts of students on that particular day are known (field trips, absenteeism, etc.)
- Step 5** The Regional Medical Health Officer will be asked to provide to the Superintendent or designate the name and telephone number of the Health Unit staff member who will be the liaison and respond to inquiries from parents and the media. It is important that these people communicate frequently to ensure both the school and the district office are properly informed.

No information regarding the medical situation should be provided by the school to parents or students, unless specifically requested by the Health Unit to do so, in which case the information will be provided in written form.

Step 6 The Health Unit may request that a series of actions be taken at the school level immediately; for example:

- that the principal assist in identifying contacts, or students at risk
- that the principal curtail certain activities at the school, e.g. assemblies, field trips where students will be in close contact for a prescribed period of time
- 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.