



## **Guidance for K-12 school settings**

The Department of Education and the Health Emergency Operations Centre is collaborating on the development of guidelines for K-12 school settings to help teachers, administrative staff, students and families prepare for a safe return to school.

As the national conversation on school re-entry evolves and jurisdictions plan for the upcoming school year, a Yukon plan for the safe return of students to schools in varying capacities is in the initial stages. For that reason, the information provided below is subject to change.

More detailed guidelines will be provided in the coming months as Yukon's COVID-19 epidemiology evolves, scientific evidence emerges and lessons are drawn from other jurisdictions at a national and international level.

### **What will school look like?**

The Chief Medical Officer of Health anticipates a full resumption of face-to-face classes in the fall. While schools will re-open, modes of learning, classroom layouts and size will be adapted to meet public health and safety measures.

Careful consideration will be given to the uniqueness of each school setting and community as we develop our approach to school re-entry and guidance.

School transportation services will need to be adapted to ensure the safety of students and bus drivers. It is anticipated that to meet physical distancing requirements, fewer students will be accommodated in school buses. Parents and caregivers may be encouraged to drop off and pick up their children from school.

### **How will students and staff stay safe?**

The following sections highlight key infection prevention and control practices to implement in school settings to create safe learning environments and workplaces. As noted above, additional information to support the safety of students and staff will be provided in the coming months.

Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in Canada and in Yukon and current evidence that children are at lower risk of developing COVID-19, schools can re-open safely

with adoption of the [six steps to staying safe](#) and additional public health and infection prevention and control measures.

### **Safe spacing**

The current order prohibiting mass gatherings does not apply to school settings and activities. There can be any number of students and staff in a school setting at any given time provided they are not all in one area at the same time and can keep a safe distance of 2 metres from each other.

Physical distancing will not always be possible, particularly with younger children. It is reasonable to establish different expectations based on age, developmental readiness and activity.

Classroom layouts and composition will change to accommodate physical distancing and students will be reminded to keep their hands to themselves and respect the personal space of their peers. Steps will be taken to reduce mixing between groups within the school and between students and teachers. For example, this may include staggered recesses and lunches taken in classrooms.

### **Pick-up and drop-off**

Pick-up and drop-off times may be staggered to reduce interactions between students, parents and school staff. If schools decide to designate class-specific entrances and exits, pick-up and drop-off locations will be communicated to parents.

### **Cleaning and disinfection**

School common areas will be cleaned, sanitized and disinfected more frequently. Employees and students will have access to cleaning wipes and supplies to disinfect common items/object after using them.

If a student becomes sick while at the school, all items touched or used by the child must be cleaned and disinfected.

### **Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**

Germs are easily spread in a school setting. Thorough hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is still the single most effective way to reduce the spread of illness. Educators play a key role in helping support all student to ensure regular and effective hand washing.

## Meals and food handling

While parents and guardians are encouraged to provide meals and snacks for their children, schools may provide food to students with appropriate controls in place.

## Personal Protective Equipment

Wearing a cloth or non-medical homemade mask is not recommended in school settings but is a personal choice. Young children in particular can experience irritation that can lead to increased touching of the face and eyes.

## What if a student or staff member gets sick?

Staff and students at higher risk of severe illness due to age or underlying health conditions should remain at home.

Parents and caregivers may be asked to assess their children daily for COVID-19 like symptoms or other infectious respiratory diseases before sending them to school. Staff may also have the responsibility to assess themselves before entering school. Staff and students who are ill will not be permitted to attend school.

## Next steps

Protocols for reporting absenteeism to Yukon Communicable Disease Control will be provided.

More fulsome guidelines will be developed for key infection prevention and control measures listed above. Additional separate guidelines may be developed and include key areas such as:

- libraries housed in school settings
- Public and user group access
- Playgrounds

**For more information** on COVID-19 and the most update information on the Yukon situation visit [Yukon.ca/COVID-19](https://yukon.ca/COVID-19) or call COVID-19 InfoLine at **877-374-0425** between 7:30 a.m. and 8 p.m. seven days a week.