

Policy 714



PREVENTING AND MANAGING ILLNESSES AND NOTIFIABLE DISEASES IN SCHOOLS

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

Effective: March 25, 2024,

Revised: N/A

1. Purpose

This policy sets the requirements for school districts and schools in New Brunswick to prevent, control and manage the spread of diseases.

2. Application

This policy applies to all schools and school districts within the New Brunswick school system.

3. Definitions

Cluster of illness refers to an unusual number of students and/or school personnel who are absent from school due to common symptoms from a particular illness.

Notifiable Diseases refers to a specific set of communicable diseases as defined in section 29 of the [Public Health Act](#) that are required to be reported to Public Health. These diseases include measles, meningitis, mumps, chickenpox, pertussis (whooping cough), rubella, Escherichia coli (E. coli infection) or other diseases or conditions that are specified in the [Reporting and Disease Regulation – Public Health Act](#).

Parents refers to parents or guardians, as defined in the [Education Act](#).

4. Legal Considerations and Authority

EDUCATION ACT, SECTION 6

The Minister...

(b.2) may establish, within the scope of this Act, provincial policies and guidelines related to

(ii) the health and well-being of pupils and school personnel,

5. Goals/Principles

5.1.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development recognizes that it is important to work in collaboration with schools, school districts, Regional Public Health, stakeholders, and other government departments to support and foster a healthy school environment that limits the spread of illnesses and diseases.

5.2.

It is important that school personnel, parents and students understand and are aware of their role in preventing and controlling the spread of diseases and illnesses in the school environment.

6. Requirements/Standards

6.1. DISEASE AND ILLNESS PREVENTION

- 6.1.1. School personnel will incorporate healthy hand and respiratory hygiene practices into the classroom routine. This includes, appropriate handwashing, covering the mouth and nose with a tissue or elbow when coughing or sneezing, etc.
- 6.1.2. School personnel will incorporate time within the regular school routine for students to practice good hand hygiene before and after outdoor play, before and after meals, and after using the washroom. School personnel will monitor younger students to ensure that they are washing their hands correctly.
- 6.1.3. Signs will be posted throughout the school to promote and remind students and school personnel to practise healthy hand and respiratory hygiene.
- 6.1.4. Custodians will clean and disinfect daily all frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, handrails, cafeteria tables, etc. as directed in the *School Maintenance and Custodial Operation Handbook*.
- 6.1.5. School principals will follow and communicate the [School Exclusion Guidelines](#) to parents when determining when and how long a student will need to be excluded from school due to an illness.

- 6.1.6.** Schools will have a designated area for students who become ill during the school day to wait to be picked up. Parents will be informed that they must pick up their child as soon as possible.
- 6.1.7.** As required in section 10 of the [Education Act](#) and section 42.1 of the [Public Health Act](#), all students entering into the school system must demonstrate proof of immunization against notifiable diseases that are outlined in [Reporting and Disease Regulation – Public Health Act](#). Exemptions will be granted to students who provide a medical exemption signed by a medical professional; or a declaration of objection to immunization signed by a parent for reason of conscience or religious beliefs. Regional Public Health will have this information available on demand in order to manage outbreaks.

6.2. REPORTING ILLNESS AND DISEASE

- 6.2.1.** As per section 29 of the [Public Health Act](#), a school principal is required to report notifiable diseases to [Regional Public Health](#). This applies when a school principal has reasonable grounds to believe that a student may have measles, meningitis, mumps, chickenpox, pertussis (whooping cough), rubella, Escherichia coli infection, or other diseases or conditions specified in the [Reporting and Disease Regulation – Public Health Act](#).
- 6.2.2.** School principals will notify [Regional Public Health](#) of instances where an unusual amount of students and/or school personnel are absent. These incidents include when;
- a) approximately 10% of the student and school personnel population are absent due to respiratory illnesses.
 - b) gastrointestinal illness (including Norovirus) where the number of cases meet or exceed the threshold identified in *Appendix A – Threshold for reporting clusters of gastrointestinal illness in schools*.
 - c) a cluster of illness among students or school personnel is thought to be due to the consumption of food or water either in the school or on school sponsored activities or events.
- 6.2.3.** When reporting a notifiable disease, a school principal will provide the required information specified in section 11 of the [Reporting and Disease Regulation – Public Health Act](#), to [Regional Public Health](#);
- a) school name and phone number
 - b) name or description of the notifiable disease
 - c) student's name, age, gender, date of birth, Medicare number
 - d) parents' information such as name, phone numbers and addresses
 - e) student's primary care medical practitioner, if known
- 6.2.4.** As per subsection 64.1(3) of the [Public Health Act](#) a school principal is required to provide personal and personal health information related to a notifiable disease when requested by Public Health officials; consent is not required.
- 6.2.5.** To help prevent the spread of a notifiable disease or mitigate risks associated with a health hazard, schools will keep attendance records up to date and will be provided to Public Health upon request.

6.2.6. On occasion, Public Health may request that a school and/or a school district report on other diseases due to a health concern within the community. This requirement would be based on a self-reporting by parents and students to their applicable school.

6.3. OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT OF A NOTIFIABLE DISEASE

6.3.1. A medical officer of health will inform the school principal of a confirmed or probable outbreak of a notifiable disease in a school.

6.3.2. A medical officer of health will provide to the school principal appropriate health and safety directives that will need to be implemented. This may include excluding students from school to prevent or control the spread of a notifiable disease.

6.3.3. The school principal will ensure that all health and safety directives from the medical officer of health are followed and implemented.

6.3.4. A medical officer of health may impose restrictions in the school environment such as limiting physical education, music education, school sponsored or endorsed events or activities to prevent or control the spread of a notifiable disease.

6.3.5. When an outbreak is declared in a school, the school principal will work with the medical officer of health to ensure that relevant information regarding the illness is available. All required health and safety directives will be implemented, including watching for symptoms, school exclusion if symptoms develop, cleaning, and disinfecting, etc.

6.3.6. A medical officer of health will inform the principal when the health and safety directives can be lifted and the risk of the spread of a notifiable disease has ended.

6.3.7. The school principal is responsible for keeping the superintendent informed of any developments or communications from Public Health at every stage of an outbreak.

7. Guidelines/Recommendations

7.1.

It is highly recommended that students who are ill do not return to school until they are fever free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and 48 hours after their last episode of diarrhea or vomiting. Students should feel well enough to participate in class activities when returning to school after an illness.

7.2.

Cleaning and disinfecting products should be available in easily accessible, age-appropriate areas of the classroom to allow school personnel and students to clean and disinfect learning materials as needed.

8. District Education Council (DEC) Policy Making

A District Education Council may develop policies and procedures that are consistent with this provincial policy. Their policy must be posted on the school district website and shared with all members of the school environment.

9. References

[*Education Act*](#)

[*Public Health Act*](#)

[*Reporting and Diseases Regulation – Public Health Act.*](#)

[Communicable Disease Control](#)

[Communicable Diseases A-to-Z](#)

[School Exclusion Guidelines](#)

[Health Canada](#)

[Public Health Clinics](#)

10. Contacts for Additional Information

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Policy and Legislative Affairs

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Original signed by

Minister