

June 1, 2020

**To: Superintendents of Public Schools and Independent School Authorities**

**Re: Update to Northern Health School Supports due to COVID-19**

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Late August 2019, you received [a letter](#) outlining supports provided to schools by Northern Health in the 2019/20 school year to enhance student's health and well-being. In light of the provincial state of emergency due to COVID-19, and the subsequent interruption of classroom instruction, we wanted to provide you with an update on Northern Health's school health supports. We will resume routine planning for the 2020/21 school year very soon and will provide that update in late August 2020.

To keep families and caregivers informed, we ask that you please share the attached letter with the Principals of the schools in your jurisdiction to pass on to families and caregivers. This message is intended to inform families of Northern Health's efforts to ensure continuity of immunization programming and other key initiatives, including BC's Vaccine Status Reporting Regulation (VSRR).

**Key updates:**

**Essential school health services**

Northern Health remains available to provide education and consultation for school personnel, parents, and students to develop safe plans of care in those cases of potentially life threatening illnesses such as epilepsy, anaphylaxis, and diabetes (including glucagon administration when requested by a parent).

**Routine grade 6 and 9 immunizations**

Your local interprofessional health teams/school nurses are planning how to continue to provide routine school immunizations to students who did not complete their immunizations during the 2019/20 school year. Students and their families may also be contacted during the 2020/21 school year for students to receive outstanding routine vaccines for which they may be eligible (as per VSRR).

**Kindergarten health events**

Kindergarten health fairs that were planned for spring 2020 may have been paused in some communities. Planning is underway to provide this service, either this school year or next, to ensure all children age four to six years will have access to early childhood health screening, information and immunizations. The update you receive in August 2020 will address kindergarten health events to be held in the 2020/21 school year.

**Mandatory reporting of immunizations for school children and youth**

BC's new Vaccination Status Reporting Regulation (VSRR) came into effect on July 1, 2019. It supports a priority initiative of the Ministry of Health and regional health authorities to document the vaccination status and encourage the immunization of school-age children in grades kindergarten to grade 12. The emergence of COVID-19 led to a pause in communications geared for this school

year that would have alerted families of missing or incomplete immunization records, and initiated further actions. Expect this work to resume in the 2020/21 school year.

**Control of common and uncommon infectious diseases**

For information on how to prevent and reduce the transmission of common colds, influenza, and gastrointestinal illnesses (“stomach flu”), see [Ways to Prevent and Manage Communicable Diseases in Schools](#) on our website. For information specific to COVID-19 and schools, see the BCCDC’s [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings](#).

Should you require our assistance with infection control strategies contact us at your convenience, or if you become concerned about a situation involving a more urgent infectious disease (e.g., measles, mumps, or pertussis), contact us immediately. Early communication will ensure:

- Schools, students and their families receive timely and accurate health information;
- Any necessary infection control measures are implemented promptly; and,
- Northern Health is able to take additional action in the broader community, if required.

**When and how to get in touch with Northern Health**

Schools are encouraged to contact Northern Health in the following situations:

Situation	Contact
Individual(s) in need of immediate medical care	Call 9-1-1.
<p><b>Urgent</b> questions or concerns about contagious diseases among students or staff, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• large clusters or outbreaks of common illnesses, such as gastrointestinal illness or influenza-like illness</li> <li>• cases of uncommon contagious diseases, such as measles, mumps, or pertussis (whooping cough)</li> </ul> <p>or</p> <p><b>Routine</b> local planning related to non-urgent health issues (immunizations, education, health promotion, overdose prevention, injury prevention, mental health and wellness, etc.)</p>	Urgently or routinely contact the Interprofessional Team member assigned to your school.

Thank you for your attention to this information. We look forward to working together to ensure that the remainder of the school year is healthy and safe.

Yours truly,



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