

COVID-19 IN SCHOOL (K-12) SETTINGS

A resource guide for schools before, during, and after a COVID-19 outbreak

Overview

[Alberta's Relaunch Strategy](#) is a three-stage plan that puts safety first while gradually reopening businesses and activities to the public, and getting people back to work and school. All Albertans have a responsibility to [help prevent the spread](#). We all need to be careful, not only for ourselves but for people around us who are vulnerable.

As Alberta schools prepare to resume in-person classes, it is important to recognize the foundational elements that will ensure a safer re-opening. Some of these elements in school settings include robust and comprehensive contact tracing, support for those who test positive to enable isolation and containment of spread, as well as rapid response teams to deal with outbreaks.

Preventive public health measures must also be implemented in order to mitigate the risk of a COVID-19 outbreak prior to it occurring. For more information on standard practice and preventative measures as they relate to school settings, please refer to the [Guidance for School Re-Entry](#).

General preventative measures include:

- **Distancing measures**
Ensure adherence to physical distancing guidelines as much as possible. If physical distancing cannot be maintained, ensure adherence to cohort guidelines.
- **Screen for symptoms**
Daily screening for symptoms and prompt testing for symptomatic individuals.
- **Stay home when sick**
Children and staff members who are ill should not attend school/work.
- **Mask wearing**
When distancing can not be maintained, and students are outside their cohort, face masks are required as an additional layer of prevention.
- **Cleaning**
Adhere to infection prevention and control guidelines.

Purpose

The purpose of this resource guide is to provide Alberta schools with an understanding of what tools are available when responding to COVID-19 in the school setting, including what to do when there are symptomatic students and/or staff at the school, what to expect when a case or outbreak is identified, how to report information, and what information to provide staff/students/parents/visitors/volunteers on and off-site.

Alberta schools refer to public, separate, francophone, charter schools, independent (private) school authorities, independent (private) Early Childhood Services (ECS), and online/distance education programs.

Although parts of this information are relevant to all schools, it is recognized that First Nation schools on reserve are a federal responsibility. For public health information, COVID-19 questions or for

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reporting purposes, First Nation schools should contact their local Health Centre or Indigenous Services Canada-First Nations or Inuit Health Branch Environmental Public Health Services (ISC-FHINB) office, in accordance with normal practice.

How to Use this Resource Guide

This resource guide is designed to assist Alberta schools in addressing COVID-19 in the school setting. It is broken down into sections highlighting six key statuses that are defined by the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 in a school setting. Each section contains information and links to key documents and resources, outlines actions the school administration can take and reviews the roles and responsibilities of other partners. For answers to common questions regarding COVID-19 in the school setting, please see [Frequently Asked Questions](#) at the end of this resource guide.

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found at [Alberta.ca/covid19](https://alberta.ca/covid19).

Status Overview

Status	New Confirmed Cases in the School Population?
Standard Practice	None
Symptoms Only	None
Alert Declared	Yes (1)
Outbreak Declared	Yes (2)
Public Reporting	Yes (5+)
Outbreak Over	None

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General Roles in an Outbreak Response

Alberta Health

Mandate: Alberta Health is responsible for developing and maintaining legislation, policies and guidelines that support the investigation of communicable diseases and outbreaks in Alberta.

Legislation: The *Public Health Act* (PHA) and associated regulations provide the legislative authority in Alberta to respond to outbreaks of communicable diseases.

Role in Outbreaks: The role of Alberta Health varies depending on the communicable disease and the size of the outbreak. Alberta Health works closely with Alberta Health Services (AHS), First Nations Inuit Health Branch (FNIHB) and other partners to ensure the response is adapted to the outbreak.

Functions:

- Coordinating outbreak-related legislative actions with other Government of Alberta (GOA) ministries
- Providing expert medical, epidemiological and public health advice and/or assistance to partners
- Conducting provincial surveillance activities in collaboration with partners
- Monitoring activities of key partners pertaining to outbreak investigation
- Consulting with national and international public health experts and advisory bodies as required
- Working in coordination with key partners to develop appropriate intervention strategies
- Working in coordination with key partners to develop public health messaging
- Working in coordination with key partners to conduct human health risk assessments
- Leading, coordinating, and/or collaborating on public communications provincially
- Sharing outbreak-related data and information with provincial and federal partners.

Where appropriate, Alberta Health may provide guidance/direction to key partners with respect to certain aspects of the outbreak investigation.

Alberta Health Services (AHS)

Mandate: AHS public health staff, including the Medical Officers of Health (MOH), Public Health Inspectors and Public Health Communicable Disease Nurses identify, investigate, manage and report notifiable diseases and communicable disease outbreaks in accordance with the PHA and pursuant regulations.

Role in Outbreaks: AHS public health staff identify outbreaks in Alberta through investigation of notifiable diseases and other reports of illness and report these to Alberta Health. AHS has a provincial leadership role in outbreak investigation and response throughout Alberta, except on federal lands, and collaborates with key internal and external partners for outbreak prevention, management and control in Alberta. AHS may collaborate with First Nations and Inuit Health Branch for outbreak investigation and response on federal lands in Alberta.

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Functions:

- Conduct investigations including inspections, sample collection and enforcement activities at facilities under their mandate
- Collect, collate, analyze and interpret data from multiple sources (e.g. case/contact investigation) to establish the epidemiology of the outbreak in order to determine the source of the outbreak
- Recommend and/or implement outbreak control strategies in order to prevent further transmission of disease,
- Monitor outbreak activity through appropriate surveillance measures
- Evaluate effectiveness of control measures
- Report outbreak data to Alberta Health as per legislated reporting requirements
- Communicate to the public as appropriate in conjunction with AHS Communications.

Schools/School Administrators/School Authorities

Role in Outbreaks: Teachers and school administrators are important partners in monitoring for the potential spread of communicable disease within school settings. Individual schools ensure the safety of students and staff by assisting to control the spread of illness. This is done through collaboration with internal and external partners, such as Alberta Health Services during an outbreak response.

Functions:

- Collaborate with AHS Public Health teams under the authority of the Zone Medical Officers of Health (MOH) to identify risks and mitigation strategies against COVID-19 outbreaks, including reporting suspect outbreaks to public health.
- Follow all guidelines, public health measures and legislation from Alberta Health, as well as any additional recommendations from the Zone MOH.
- Work with AHS Public Health to provide information as required for contact tracing.
- Work with AHS Public Health to implement follow-up recommendations and messaging for staff, parents/guardians, visitors and students.
- Maintain communication with parents/guardians and school boards.

Alert and Outbreak Notification Process Flow Diagram

School administrators, school authorities, AHS and Alberta Health work collaboratively to effectively address potential outbreaks of COVID-19 in school settings. Please see [Appendix A](#) for a diagram outlining the alert and outbreak notification process for AHS, school administrators and Alberta Health.

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Important Definitions

Alert

An alert is generally defined as a warning sign that there may be more cases than would normally be expected in a defined community, geographical area or season.

A COVID-19 alert in a school setting is defined as one confirmed case of COVID-19 in either a student or staff member in the school setting.

Close Contact

In a school setting, close contacts are individuals that:

- a) Provide direct care for an individual with COVID-19 or who had similar close physical contact
OR
- b) Had close prolonged contact (i.e., for more than 15 minutes cumulative and within two metres) with a case
OR
- c) Had direct contact with infectious body fluids of an individual with COVID-19 (i.e., was coughed or sneezed on).

Cohort

A COVID-19 cohort, also referred to as a bubble, circle, or safe squad, is a small group whose members are always the same people, and who do not always keep 2 metres apart. Cohorts in schools will generally be the size of one class.

COVID-19 Case

A person with laboratory confirmation of infection with the virus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19.

Outbreak

An outbreak is generally defined as “the occurrence of cases of disease in excess of what would normally be expected in a defined community, geographical area or season” (World Health Organization, 2018).

A COVID-19 outbreak within a school setting is defined as “two or more confirmed cases (staff and/or student) within a 14 day period (one incubation period) OR two or more confirmed cases (staff/child) that are epidemiologically linked.”

Public Reporting

When a school outbreak reaches five confirmed cases in students and/or staff members in the school, the outbreak will be listed on the publicly-available website.

Symptomatic

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An individual who has signs or symptoms of COVID-19 illness. For a full list of common, serious and other symptoms please refer to [Symptoms and Testing](#).

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Standard Practice

If there are **NO confirmed cases** and **NO symptomatic individuals** in your school setting:

Who is involved?

- Schools and School Administration

What tools and resources may be useful?

- [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#)
- [Screening Daily Checklist](#)
- [Guidance for cohorts](#)
- [Alberta Health information posters and fact sheets](#)
- [Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Hand Sanitizer](#)
- [List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#)
- [Health Canada list of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for wearing of non-medical face masks for the general public](#)
- [Alberta's COVID-19 response](#)
- [COVID-19 status map](#)

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

- Schools and School Authorities should establish their own COVID-19 plans prior to reopening schools. This may include being aware of local disease risk in the community and additional public health measures that may have been implemented (see Alberta's [COVID-19 status map](#)).
- In specific contexts (e.g., communal living settings) where a community outbreak poses an increased risk to school staff or students, schools may be directed by local and provincial public health officials to follow additional outbreak control measures.
- Schools are to follow the standard guidelines in the guidance designated by Alberta Education: [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#).
- Parents/guardians play an integral role in the screening process for the child/student's daily involvement in school. Parents and children/students must be provided a copy of the [Screening Daily Checklist](#) upon school registration with the expectation that it needs to be completed on a daily basis.
- Before leaving home, staff, visitors and volunteers who will access the school for work or education, must self-screen for symptoms each day that they enter the school using the [Screening Daily Checklist](#).

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What is Alberta Health Services' Role?

- Your Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH) supports school authorities through providing guidance on communicable disease risk. If you have concerns, need specific guidance, or have questions about how to apply the measures outlined in the guidance document, please contact AHS Environmental Public Health in your zone for assistance (see below) or contact AHS Environmental Public Health using the [web portal](#). For general COVID-19 questions from staff or parents, please contact Health Link at 811.

Zone Environmental Public Health Contacts

ZONE	CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBER FOR MAIN OFFICE
Calgary Zone	calgaryzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Calgary 403-943-2288
Central Zone	centralzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Red Deer 403-356-6366
Edmonton Zone	edmontonzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Edmonton 780-735-1800
North Zone	northzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Grande Prairie 780-513-7517
South Zone	she.southzoneeph@ahs.ca	Lethbridge 403-388-6689

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Symptomatic Individual(s)

If there are **NO confirmed cases** in your school setting, but there is **one or more individual(s) with symptoms**:

Who is involved?

- Schools and School Administration
- Alberta Health Services (AHS) – *as outlined below*

What tools and resources may be useful?

- [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#)
- [Screening Daily Checklist](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [Alberta Health Services COVID-19 self-assessment](#)
- [Alberta isolation requirements](#)
- [Guidance for cohorts](#)
- [Alberta Health information posters and fact sheets](#)
- [Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Hand Sanitizer](#)
- [List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#)
- [Health Canada list of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for wearing of non-medical face masks for the general public](#)
- [Alberta's COVID-19 response](#)
- [AHS Mental Health Support](#)
- General questions (school staff or parents): Please call Health Link at 811
- For information on staff personal protective equipment (PPE) use in the school, please refer to your WHS/OHS.

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

- If the school has children/students or school staff who are symptomatic, please see Table 1 below for a detailed description of steps to take. Through the daily screening process, the majority of symptomatic individuals will not enter the school. However, it is important for the school to have a plan in place to: safely isolate symptomatic individuals away from others in a designated space that allows for physical distancing of 2 metres, have potential supplies on hand (i.e. Personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies), and have the correct contact information for parents/guardians of children/students so the child/student may be picked up as soon as possible.
- Some individuals with pre-existing conditions may experience COVID-19-like symptoms as part of their normal baseline health or their known pre-existing condition. Schools must keep records

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of a student's known pre-existing conditions. If a student develops [symptoms](#) that could be caused by COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g. allergies), the student should be tested for COVID-19 at least once to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to the school. This will be considered the student's baseline health.

- Schools should have flexibility for student and staff personal circumstances, such as flexible attendance and sick leave for students and staff who are symptomatic or who may have been identified as close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19. The period of time that children/students and staff members must remain home and isolate is dependent on symptoms and COVID-19 test results. For more information, please see the current requirements for [isolation and quarantine](#) and/or [Appendix E](#).
- Classroom-based learning may continue and students/staff with no symptoms do not need to be sent home or quarantined if there was a symptomatic-only individual in the school (NOT a confirmed case).
- Alberta Health Services (AHS) receives all of the case notifications directly from the lab. In the event there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 attending the school, the school will be notified by AHS.
- Parents and staff with general inquiries can be directed to call Health Link at 811 or can visit the Alberta Health website: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6410.aspx>
- Health Link should not be used for questions regarding specific confirmed case/s and contact management as those will be addressed directly by the AHS outbreak team managing that case/s.
- If there is an absence rate of 10% due to illness, OR there is an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms, please report to your local public health unit or school nurse as per your usual notification process, regardless of the COVID-19 test results for each individual. AHS Communicable Disease Control or Environmental Public Health will follow up with your school to investigate based on influenza-like illness or gastrointestinal symptoms.
 - The purpose of this is to continue to monitor for other clusters of illness that may not be COVID-19 related and alert AHS to potential outbreaks of other diseases.

What is Alberta Health Services' Role?

- If there is only a single individual with symptoms, or a small number of individuals with symptoms, notification to AHS is NOT required.
- Symptomatic students and staff are asked to complete the [AHS Online COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool](#) as noted above. If a school has reported an absence rate of 10% or higher due to illness OR there is an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms that has been reported to Alberta Health Services through the local Public Health unit or school nurse, AHS Public Health will follow up with the school.
- If the school administration notifies AHS of a COVID-19 positive individual in their school setting and AHS had not previously notified the school of this case, AHS will follow up and investigate.

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Table 1: What to do if a Student, Staff Member or Visitor Develops Symptoms?

If a Student Develops One or More Symptoms of COVID-19 (See all COVID-19 symptoms)	If a Staff Member or Visitor Develops One or More Symptoms of COVID-19 (See all COVID-19 symptoms)
<i>If student develops symptoms at home:</i>	<i>If staff member develops symptoms at home:</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Students/children must not enter the school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 Direct the student to stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g. call Health Link 811, or their primary care practitioner or, if needed, 911 for emergency response, and fill out the AHS Online COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool to determine if they should be tested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff must not enter the school if they have symptoms of COVID-19 Direct the staff member to stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g. call Health Link 811, or their primary care practitioner or, if needed, 911 for emergency response, and fill out the AHS Online COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tool to determine if they should be tested
<i>If student develops symptoms at school::</i>	<i>If staff member develops symptoms at work::</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child/student should be asked to wear a non-medical mask if they are able. The child/student should be isolated in a separate room. If a separate room is not available, the child/student must be kept at least 2 metres away from other children/students. The child/student’s parent/guardian should be notified to pick up the student immediately. If the child/student requires close contact and care, staff can continue to care for the child/student until the parent is able to pick up the child/student. The student and staff should wear a mask and close interactions with the student that may result in contact with the student’s respiratory secretions should be avoided. If very close contact is required, the staff member should also use a face shield or eye protection. Staff/students must perform hand hygiene before donning a mask and before and after removing the mask and before and after touching any items used by the child/student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The staff member should be asked to wear a non-medical mask if they are able. The staff member should go home as soon as possible. If the staff member is unable to leave immediately, they should be isolated in a separate and empty room or maintain a 2 metre distance from others. Staff must wash their hands before donning a mask and before and after removing the mask and before and after touching any items used by the staff member. All items the staff member touched/used while isolated must be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the staff member leaves. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. paper, books, cardboard puzzles) should be removed from the classroom and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 72 hours.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All items the student touched/used while isolated must be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child/student has been picked up. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. paper, books, cardboard puzzles) should be removed from the classroom and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 72 hours.	
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Alert

If there is **ONE confirmed case** in your school setting (with or without symptoms), your school will be on an Alert Status.

Who is involved?

- Schools and School Administration
- Alberta Health Services (AHS)
- Alberta Health

Please see [Appendix A](#) for the COVID-19 school outbreak notification process flow diagram.

What tools and resources may be useful?

- [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#)
- [Screening Daily Checklist](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [Alberta Health Services COVID-19 self-assessment](#)
- [Alberta isolation requirements](#)
- [Guidance for cohorts](#)
- [Alberta Health information posters and fact sheets](#)
- [Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Hand Sanitizer](#)
- [List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#)
- [Health Canada list of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for wearing of non-medical face masks for the general public](#)
- [Alberta's COVID-19 response](#)
- [AHS Mental Health Support](#)
- General Questions (school staff or parents): Please call Health Link at 811

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

- Schools are to work collaboratively with Alberta Health Services (AHS) Public Health under the authority of the Zone Medical Officer of Health/designate in order to manage their alert status and adhere to any recommendations or orders provided by the Medical Officer of Health/designate. This includes working with Alberta Health Services (AHS) Public Health to provide information required for contact tracing, as outlined in the *Alberta Public Health Act*.
 - Ensure all record keeping is complete and communicate with AHS Public Health for contact tracing.

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- Send Alert message when instructed by AHS to inform school parents/guardians of one case in the school, what actions are being taken to mitigate the risk of spread and a reminder to monitor for symptoms (See [Appendix B](#) for template).
- While schools may be required to share student/staff information with AHS Public Health under the *Public Health Act*, it is important for school staff and administration to protect the privacy of students/staff members. Personal information that may identify individuals who are COVID-19 cases to other members of the school community or to the public cannot be disclosed.
- School staff are to review all applicable public health guidance documents and plan to ensure adherence to public health measures to mitigate the risk of additional COVID-19 spread.
- School administrators are to inform their local school board/school authority that their school is under an “Alert”.
- Schools should have flexibility for student and staff personal circumstances, such as flexible attendance and sick leave for students and staff who are symptomatic and in isolation or who may have been identified as close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and are in quarantine. School staff should be prepared to support continued learning for all students who are at home due to isolation and/or quarantine. The period of time that children/students and staff members must remain home and isolate is dependent on symptoms and COVID-19 test results. For more information, please see the [Alberta isolation](#) requirements and/or [Appendix E](#).

What is Alberta Health Services’ role?

- AHS Public Health is notified of all positive laboratory test results for COVID-19 and is responsible for public health investigation and follow-up with the case(s) and their close contacts.
- AHS Public Health will contact the school principal/administrator to advise that a case of COVID-19 was present at the school and that the school is on an alert status.
- AHS Public Health will monitor for ongoing COVID-19 cases at the school.
- AHS Public Health will advise school administration to communicate alert to school parents/guardians to inform of one case in the school, what actions are being taken to mitigate the risk of spread and a reminder to monitor for symptoms (See [Appendix B](#) for template).
- AHS Environmental Public Health may conduct a site assessment if warranted, at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH).
- AHS Public Health will notify Alberta Health of the school alert status.

What is Alberta Health’s role?

- Alberta Health receives a report of all confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Alberta Health receives notification of school alerts from AHS Public Health.
- Alberta Health will notify Alberta Education and other provincial partners as required.

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Outbreak

If there are **TWO OR MORE confirmed cases** in your school setting (staff/child) within a 14 day period (one incubation period) OR two or more confirmed cases staff child) that are epidemiologically linked.

Who is involved?

- Schools and School Administration
- Alberta Health Services (AHS)
- Alberta Health

Please see [Appendix A](#) for the COVID-19 school outbreak notification process flow diagram.

What tools and resources may be useful?

- [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#)
- [Line list template](#)
- [Screening Daily Checklist](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [Alberta Health Services COVID-19 self-assessment](#)
- [Alberta isolation requirements](#)
- [Guidance for cohorts](#)
- [Alberta Health information posters and fact sheets](#)
- [Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Hand Sanitizer](#)
- [List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#)
- [Health Canada list of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for wearing of non-medical face masks for the general public](#)
- [Alberta's COVID-19 response](#)
- [AHS Mental Health Support](#)
- General Questions (school staff or parents): Please call Health Link at 811

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

- Schools are to work collaboratively with AHS Public Health under the authority of the Zone Medical Officer of Health/designate in order to manage their outbreak status and adhere to any recommendations or orders provided by the Medical Officer of Health/designate. This includes working with AHS Public Health to provide information required for contact tracing, as outlined in the Alberta *Public Health Act*.
 - Ensure all record keeping is complete and communicate with AHS Public Health for contact tracing.

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- Send letter provided by AHS to school parents/guardians to inform of outbreak in the school what actions are being taken to mitigate the risk of spread and a reminder to monitor for symptoms (See [Appendix C](#) for sample only).
- While schools may be required to share student/staff information with AHS Public Health under the *Public Health Act*, it is important for school staff and administration to protect student/staff information, including NOT disclosing personal information that may identify individuals who are COVID-19 cases to other members of the school community or to the public.
- Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH); decisions on the need for alternate instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by Government in conjunction with local officials.
- School staff are to review the applicable school health guidance and public health guidance documents and ensure adherence to all public health measures to mitigate the risk of additional COVID-19 spread.
- School staff are to ensure implementation and strict adherence to any recommendations from AHS Public Health.
- School administrators are to inform their local school board/school authority that their school has an outbreak of COVID-19.
- The school administration is to advise AHS Public Health of any relevant/related issues or difficulties in following guidance recommendations.
- Schools should have flexibility for student and staff personal circumstances, such as flexible attendance and sick leave for students and staff who are symptomatic and in isolation or who may have been identified as close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and are in quarantine. School staff should be prepared to support continued learning for all students who are at home due to isolation and/or quarantine. The period of time that children/students and staff members must remain home and isolate is dependent on symptoms and COVID-19 test results. For more information, please see the [Alberta isolation requirements](#) and/or [Appendix E](#).

What is Alberta Health Services' role?

- AHS Public Health is notified of all positive laboratory test results for COVID-19 and is responsible for public health investigation and follow-up with the case(s) and their close contacts
- AHS Public Health will communicate with the parent / guardian of any additional student cases, or with staff members who are confirmed as a case with a positive COVID-19 laboratory result for the purpose of contact tracing.
- AHS Public Health will contact the school principal/administrator to advise that additional cases of COVID-19 were identified at the school and that the Zone MOH/designate has declared that the school is on outbreak status.
- AHS Public Health will monitor for ongoing activity of disease.

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- AHS Public Health will provide the school administration with a letter to distribute to school parents/guardians to inform of additional cases in the school what actions are being taken to mitigate the risk of spread and a reminder to monitor for symptoms (See [Appendix C](#) for sample only).
- AHS Environmental Public Health may conduct a site assessment if warranted, at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH).
- AHS Public Health will notify Alberta Health of the school outbreak status and all additional cases in the outbreak. This information will be publicly reported when five or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 are identified at the school.
- AHS Public Health will advise the school that the outbreak will be reported publicly on the Alberta Health website if there are five or more confirmed cases of COVID-19 at the school.
- The Zone MOH may make recommendations or provide orders to effectively control the outbreak. These recommendations will be based on the number of active COVID-19 cases in the school and the risk of ongoing transmission, as determined by the public health investigation.
- AHS may also support the development of key messages for the school outbreak in collaboration with Alberta Health communications.

What is Alberta Health's role?

- Alberta Health receives a report from AHS of any additional confirmed cases of COVID-19.
- Alberta Health receives notification of school Outbreak from AHS.
- Alberta Health will notify Alberta Education of the outbreak and share outbreak-related data and information with provincial and federal partners as needed.
- Alberta Health will coordinate outbreak-related legislative actions with other Government of Alberta Ministries.
- Alberta Health will provide expert medical, epidemiological and public health advice and/or assistance to partners as indicated, as well as conduct provincial surveillance activities in collaboration with partners.

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Public Reporting

If there are **FIVE OR MORE confirmed cases** in the outbreak at your school setting, the outbreak at your school will be publicly reported on the Alberta Health outbreak website.

Who is involved?

- Schools and School Administration
- Alberta Health Services (AHS)
- Alberta Health

Please see [Appendix A](#) for the COVID-19 school outbreak notification process flow diagram.

What tools and resources may be useful?

- [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#)
- [Line list template](#)
- [Screening Daily Checklist](#)
- [Symptoms of COVID-19](#)
- [Alberta Health Services COVID-19 self-assessment](#)
- [Alberta isolation requirements](#)
- [Guidance for cohorts](#)
- [Alberta Health information posters and fact sheets](#)
- [Alberta Health Services](#)
- [Alberta Health Services Infection Prevention and Control](#)
- [Hand Sanitizer](#)
- [List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#)
- [Health Canada list of disinfectants with evidence for use against COVID-19](#)
- [Guidance for wearing of non-medical face masks for the general public](#)
- [Alberta's COVID-19 response](#)
- [AHS Mental Health Support](#)
- General Questions (school staff or parents): Please call Health Link at 811

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

- Continue with all roles and responsibilities under [Outbreak](#).
- Schools are to work collaboratively with AHS Public Health under the authority of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH)/designate in order to manage their outbreak status and adhere to any recommendations or orders provided by the Zone MOH/designate. This includes working with AHS Public Health to provide information required for contact tracing, as outlined in the *Alberta Public Health Act*.
 - Ensure all record keeping is complete and communicate with AHS Public Health for contact tracing.

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- While schools may be required to share student/staff information with AHS Public Health under the *Public Health Act*, it is important for school staff and administration to protect student/staff information, including NOT disclosing personal information that may identify individuals who are COVID-19 cases to other members of the school community or to the public.
- Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone MOH; decisions on the need for alternate instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by Government in conjunction with local officials.
- School staff are to review the applicable school health guidance and public health guidance documents and ensure adherence to all public health measures to mitigate the risk of additional COVID-19 spread.
- School staff are to ensure implementation and strict adherence to any recommendations from AHS Public Health.
- School administrators are to inform their local school board/school authority that their school has reached five or more cases of COVID-19 in their outbreak and that the outbreak will be publicly reported.
- The school administration is to advise AHS Public Health of any relevant/related issues or difficulties in following guidance recommendations.
- Schools should have flexibility for student and staff personal circumstances, such as flexible attendance and sick leave for students and staff who are symptomatic and in isolation or who may have been identified as close contacts of a confirmed case of COVID-19 and are in quarantine. School staff should be prepared to support continued learning for all students who are at home due to isolation and/or quarantine. The period of time that children/students and staff members must remain home and isolate is dependent on symptoms and COVID-19 test results. For more information, please see the [Alberta isolation requirements](#) and/or [Appendix E](#).
- School administrations may receive questions from parents, the public or media about the outbreak being publicly reported. School administrations can answer general questions from students, parents/guardians and staff. Public or media questions should be redirected to Alberta Health at this time.

What is Alberta Health Services' Role?

- AHS Public Health is notified of all additional positive laboratory test results for COVID-19 and is responsible for public health investigation and follow-up with the case(s) and their close contacts.
- AHS Public Health will communicate with the parent / guardian of any additional student cases, or with staff members who are confirmed as a case with a positive COVID-19 laboratory result for the purpose of contact tracing.
- AHS Public Health will monitor for ongoing activity of disease at the school.
- AHS Environmental Public Health may conduct a site assessment if warranted, at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH).

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- The Zone MOH may make recommendations or provide orders to effectively control the outbreak. These recommendations will be based on the number of active COVID-19 cases in the school and the risk of ongoing transmission, as determined by the public health investigation.
- AHS can answer applicable questions from parents/guardians, the school or other partners involved in the outbreak. Public or media questions should be redirected to Alberta Health at this time.
- AHS may also support the development of key messages for the school outbreak in collaboration with Alberta Health communications.

What is Alberta Health's role?

- Alberta Health will monitor schools with an outbreak of COVID-19 for case counts equalling or greater than five, and will report the outbreak on the public website.
- Alberta Health will continue to share outbreak-related data and information with provincial and federal partners as needed.
- Alberta Health will continue to coordinate outbreak-related legislative actions with other Government of Alberta Ministries.
- Alberta Health will continue to provide expert medical, epidemiological and public health advice and/or assistance to partners as indicated, as well as conduct provincial surveillance activities in collaboration with partners.
- Alberta Health will lead and/or coordinate public communications about the outbreak at a provincial level.

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Declaring an Outbreak Over

AHS Public Health will inform the school administration when the outbreak is declared over.

Who is involved?

- The school/school administration
- Alberta Health Services (AHS)
- Alberta Health

What tools and resources may be useful?

- [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 1](#) OR [Guidance for School Re-Entry – Scenario 2](#)
- [Screening Daily Checklist](#)

What are the school's roles and responsibilities?

- Follow recommendations from AHS Public Health, including when to resume regular instructional activities that may have been disrupted by the COVID-19 outbreak and returning to [standard practices](#)
- Send message to parents/guardians when advised by AHS that the outbreak is over, indicating the outbreak is over and to remind parents/guardians to continue to complete routine daily screening of students/children for signs or symptoms of illness (See [Appendix D](#) for template).
- Inform school authority that outbreak declared over
- Evaluate the effectiveness of your school's response:
 - Discuss and note best practices and lessons learned
 - Identify any issues in your response and effective solutions

What is Alberta Health Services' Role?

- AHS Public Health will work with the school administration to determine when the outbreak can be declared over. The standard time frame is 28 days with no new cases. The Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH)/designate declares the outbreak over in the school.
- AHS Public Health will notify Alberta Health that the school COVID-19 outbreak is over, and close the outbreak investigation.

What is Alberta Health's role?

- Alberta Health receives a report that the COVID-19 outbreak is over.
- Alberta Health will update the public website to reflect when the outbreak is declared over/closed.

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Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Q: Does everyone in the class need to be quarantined if there is one symptomatic child/staff/visitor/volunteer?

A: No, everyone in the class does not need to be quarantined. If a child/staff/visitor/volunteer has one of the core symptoms of fever, cough (new cough or worsening chronic cough), shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (new or worsening), runny nose or sore throat, they must stay home and isolate for 10 days. If they have any other symptoms of illness, they should stay home until their symptoms resolve. Any individual with symptoms of COVID-19 should be tested as soon as possible, which can be arranged through the [AHS online self-assessment tool](#). Contacts of someone who IS NOT a case of COVID-19 are not required to isolate or quarantine. Please see [Appendix E](#) for isolation and quarantine requirements.

Q. Do we need to send the whole class home if the teacher becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19?

A: If a teacher or staff member becomes a confirmed case of COVID-19, Alberta Health Services Public Health will work with the school community to identify close contacts and ensure that they follow the appropriate quarantine restrictions. The specific details of the case will determine who is considered to be a close contact.

Q: How many confirmed cases in a single school will result in closure of the school?

A: Any one confirmed case will result in an investigation by Alberta Health Services Public Health. It is likely with a single case that exposure is limited to a single class or group. Closures of specific classes, cohorts or schools may occur dependent on the outcome of an investigation. Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH); decisions on the need for alternate instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by Government in conjunction with local officials.

Q: What does the school administration do if a staff member or parent/guardian of a student/child calls the school to say they/the student or child are COVID-19 positive and the school has not been previously notified by AHS?

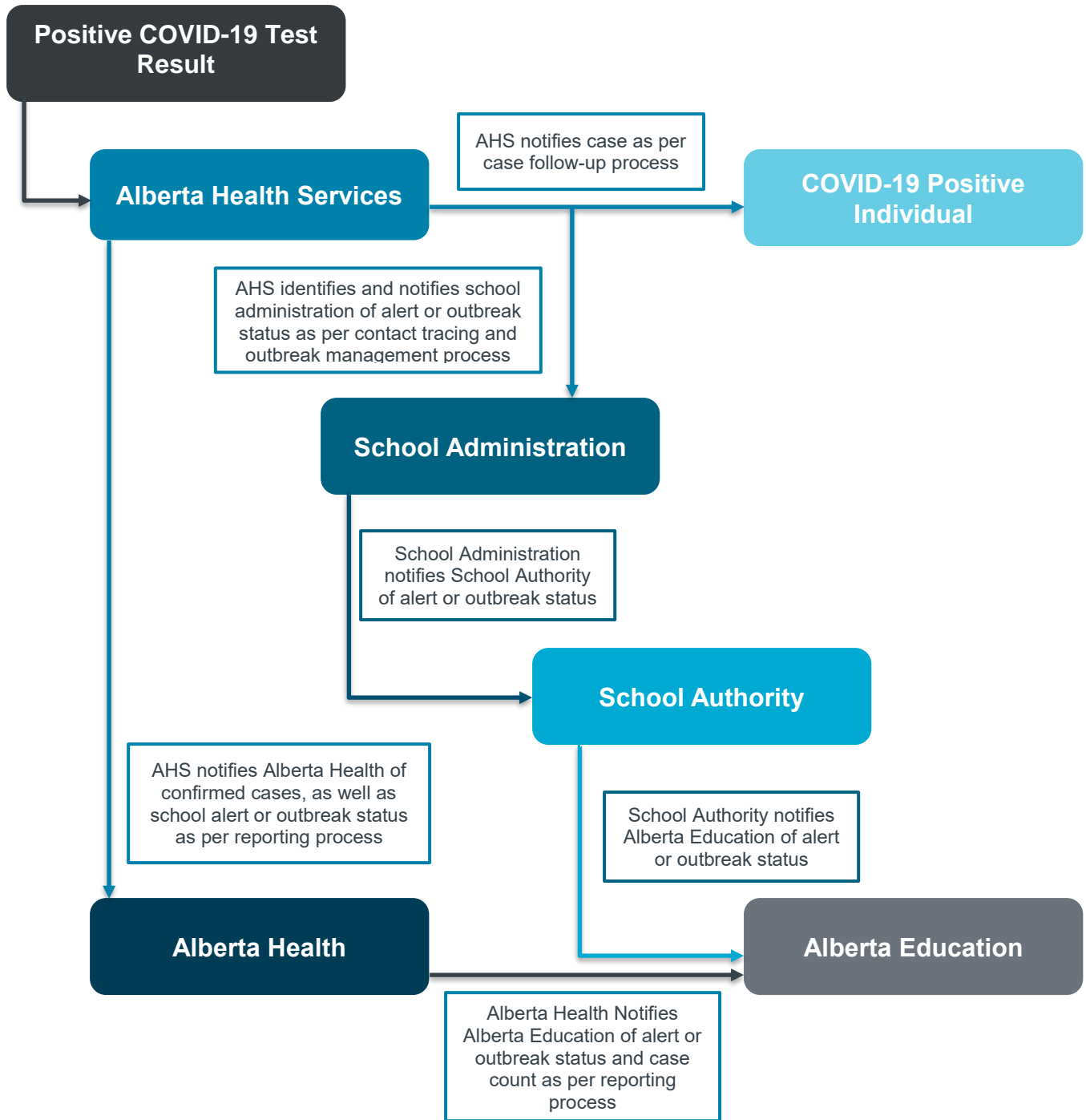
A: Alberta Health Services (AHS) receives all of the case notifications directly from the lab. If there is a confirmed case in a school, **the school will be contacted by AHS**. It is not necessary to contact AHS to confirm. The appropriate individuals and schools will be notified. Parents and staff with general inquiries can be directed to call Health Link at 811 or can visit the Alberta Health website:

<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/Page6410.aspx>

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Appendix A: COVID-19 school outbreak notification process flow diagram



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Appendix B: Sample parent/guardian alert

Dear Parent/Guardian,

A case of COVID-19 has been diagnosed in an individual from _____ school. We are working closely with Alberta Health Services to ensure necessary measures are in place to protect all students.

Alberta Health Services will be contacting parents/guardians of students, as well as any staff/visitors/volunteers who may have been in close contact with the case.

We remind parents/guardians of students, as well as any staff/visitors/volunteers to monitor for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19. The Alberta Health daily checklist can be found [here](#). Please remember to complete the checklist each day prior to attending school.

As a reminder, if you/your child has any of the symptoms of illness listed on the Alberta Health daily checklist, please fill out the online [Alberta Health Services COVID-19 self-assessment](#) or call Health Link at 811 and stay home/keep your child at home.

We will continue to provide additional information to parents / guardians as it is available.

Sincerely,

Principal / designate of _____ school

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Appendix C: Sample letter for COVID-19 school outbreak

Date
To:

RE: Notice of COVID-19 to Staff, Students and Visitors in [name of school and location]

Public Health staff are investigating cases of COVID-19 at [name of school]. The virus is passed from person to person by large, respiratory droplets, like from a cough or sneeze. This means that a person would need to have direct contact with droplets from a sick person or surfaces that they have recently touched. The risk of the general population in the school becoming infected because of these cases is low.

If staff or students have been identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, Public Health will contact them directly for follow-up. If staff or students have not been identified as a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case but develop symptoms as listed on the daily screening tool, please self-isolate at home and complete the online assessment tool or call Health Link at 811 as soon as possible to arrange for COVID-19 testing. If you or your child require medical attention, please call ahead to your health care provider or call Health Link at 811 to help guide you to the right care provider and make appropriate arrangements to care for yourself or your child safely.

If this is an emergency and you or your child require urgent attention, call 911 and tell them that you or your child may have been in contact with COVID-19 so that they can make appropriate arrangements to care for you or your child safely.

To help minimize spread of any respiratory virus we always recommend the following:

- Make sure everyone in your household washes their hands with soap and water often. If soap and water are not available, you can use alcohol-based hand sanitizer if hands are not visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your face with unwashed hands.
- Use a tissue when you cough or sneeze and throw it in a garbage bin lined with a plastic bag. Wash your hands immediately after that. If you don't have a tissue, sneeze or cough into your sleeve.
- Stay home if you're sick. If your kids are sick, keep them home from school.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces that are used often and shared by everyone in your home such as door knobs, light switches and bathroom taps.
- Practice physical distancing outside the home (at least 2 metres) and wear a mask in public spaces if social distancing is not possible.
- Ensure your child's immunizations are up to date, including their annual influenza immunization.

For further information regarding COVID-19, please call Health Link at 811, and/or visit the Alberta Health Services website for COVID-19:

Sincerely,
Original signed (Zone Medical Officer of Health)

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Appendix D: Sample parent/guardian notification outbreak closed

Dear Parent/Guardian,

This notification is to inform you that the outbreak at _____ school has been declared over by the Zone Medical Officer of Health.

We remind parents/guardians of students, as well as any staff/visitors/volunteers to continue monitoring for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 as part of their routine daily practice. The Alberta Health daily checklist can be found [here](#). Please remember to complete the checklist each day prior to attending school.

As a reminder, if you/your child has any of the symptoms of illness listed on the Alberta Health daily checklist, please fill out the online [Alberta Health Services COVID-19 self-assessment](#) or call Health Link at 811 and stay home/keep your child at home.

Thank you for your support and continued collective efforts in protecting our school community.

Sincerely,

Principal / designate of _____ school

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Appendix E: Management of individuals who are tested for COVID-19

Symptoms	COVID-19 Test Result:	Management of Individual:	Management of Individual's Close Contacts*:
Symptomatic	Positive	Isolate for a minimum 10 days or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer.	Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure
	Negative	Stay home until symptoms resolve. Except: if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarantine for 14 days since the last exposure (even with a negative result) 	N/A
Asymptomatic	Positive	Isolate for a minimum of 10 days from the collection date of the swab.	Quarantine for 14 days from last exposure
	Negative	No isolation required. Except: if identified as a close contact of a confirmed case <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quarantine for 14 days since the last exposure (even with a negative result) 	N/A

*Close Contacts:

- Provide direct care for an individual with COVID-19 or who had similar close physical contact OR
- Had close prolonged contact OR
- Had direct contact with infectious body fluids of an individual with COVID-19 (i.e., was coughed or sneezed on).

NOTES:

- **Individuals WILL NOT receive written or email documentation of their results. Those who wish to access their results directly should sign up for MyHealth Records.**
- **There is not a requirement to provide evidence of negative results prior to returning to school.**
- **AHS Public Health will contact all confirmed cases and their close contacts and provide them clear direction.**
- **AHS Public Health will notify the school of a positive case.**
- **Individuals with COVID-19 symptoms are encouraged to be tested using the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#)**