

Administrative Procedure 103

Last Revised: May 2018

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Background

The division and Alberta Health Services share the responsibility to provide appropriate education and procedures related to the spread of communicable diseases in division schools. In fulfilling this responsibility, it is accepted that universal precautionary measures undertaken by all staff, students and parents/legal guardians, are necessary in the prevention of serious communicable diseases.

Within the tradition of Catholic education, all students and staff will be treated with dignity and compassion. The division recognizes its responsibility to be protective of individual rights and freedoms in the management of infected students and staff by maintaining confidentiality.

Appropriate procedures are critical in ensuring the safety of students and staff when anyone has been identified as having a communicable disease, as determined in consultation with the appropriate health authority and the division's superintendent, or designate. In health related matters the division relies on direction and guidance from Alberta Health Services and medical professionals. In addition, staff and administration are expected to consistently follow preventative measures when dealing with the potential transmission of communicable disease such as Measles, Mumps, Chicken Pox (Varicella), Scarlet Fever (Streptococcal) and Norovirus.

Definition

“Communicable disease means an illness in humans that is caused by an organism or micro-organism or its toxic products and is transmitted directly or indirectly from an infected person or animal or the environment.”

Procedures

1. In circumstances where students and staff have communicable diseases, the division will manage the supports, procedures and privacy issues in accordance with the *Public Health Act* and the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FOIP)*. Alberta Health Services determines when protection of the individual or the public is required.
 - 1.1 “In any dispute as to the diagnosis of a disease in respect of which action may be taken under section 29 (1) of the *Public Health Act*, the Medical Officer of Health's decision as to the diagnosis of the disease is final, subject only to a review by the Chief Medical Officer.”
2. The *Public Health Act* and *FOIP* require confidentiality. Health authorities are not at liberty to divulge any specific information with regard to individuals with communicable diseases. This same standard of care with regard to confidentiality applies to division personnel.

3. If the infected student or staff member does not present a risk to others, there is no need to inform any school authorities. Notifiable communicable diseases are listed in schedules 1, 2, and 3 of the *Communicable Disease Regulation* of the *Public Health Act*. All sources of information will follow the reporting requirements, as outlined in *Alberta Regulation 238/85: Communicable Diseases Regulation*.
4. Unless the physical condition of the staff or student poses a health risk, the employee may continue to fulfill their duties and the student may continue to attend classes.
5. In the majority of cases, the parents/legal guardians and health professionals will undertake diagnosis of a communicable disease. However, when school personnel suspect a student has a communicable disease, they are to contact the parents/legal guardians and request that they seek medical advice. In cases where knowledge of the health status of the child is necessary for proper care procedures, school authorities must be notified by the parents/legal guardians and modifications to the learning environment must be made in accordance with the resources available within the division and reasonable expectations for success.
6. Principals are responsible to develop a plan with the superintendent, or designate, to advise staff and parents of students with susceptibility to communicable diseases when circumstances arise that might compromise their child's health. At the same time, the confidentiality of an individual's health information must be maintained.
7. Division/staff responsibilities:
 - 7.1 All staff are expected to follow routine hygiene practices and to support students to do the same through curriculum implementation and day to day procedures. Because proper hand washing is a significant preventative measure for many communicable diseases, all individuals must play an active role and be responsible for staying healthy and preventing the spread of infection. In addition to washing hands frequently, all students and staff must cover up when coughing or sneezing. Staff are responsible for keeping shared surfaces clean.
 - 7.2 All staff and students must follow universal and precautionary hygienic procedures when coming in contact with blood or other body fluids. School personnel are to be aware of first aid procedures. Proper equipment, including disposable gloves are to be worn for any direct contact with blood must be part of first aid kits.
 - 7.3 In cases where a student has a history of bleeding easily, biting, spitting or other actions that may result in an exchange of bodily fluids, school staff involved will, at all times, be prepared to follow appropriate division procedures. e.g. have gloves on hand at all times, ensure that appropriate response procedures are used and that training related to them is current, etc.

- 7.4 In situations where, despite following division procedures and protocols for the handling of blood and bodily fluids, division personnel or volunteers are exposed to a communicable disease, the principal or designate, in consultation with health authorities and the appropriate division staff will advise the staff member that they have been exposed to a risk of contracting a communicable disease.
- 7.5 School administration are required to complete an occupational health and safety orientation with all staff at the beginning of each school year and with all new staff as they are hired throughout the school year. It is required all staff sign off that they have attended this orientation.
- 7.6 In the event of a communicable disease is identified the principal must immediately communicate with the superintendent.
- 7.7 School authorities and division administration will regularly review the division procedures regarding communicable diseases in the context of ensuring occupational health and safety procedures are kept current.
- 7.8 The principal must notify communicable diseases at the regional office of the Alberta Health Services to inform of any human or animal bite if it breaks the skin. All incidents must be recorded.
8. Education:
- 8.1 In cases where staff or students are at risk from the spread of a disease from an infected individual, an appropriate plan for alternate instruction for the infected person must be developed in consultation with the parents/legal guardians and students, where appropriate. In developing the plan, the limitations of existing resources within the division and reasonable expectations must be considered.
- In determining if a communicable disease situation is severe enough to warrant an alternative instructional plan, principals must consult with the superintendent, or designate.
- In the case of students being involved, the principal must ensure the parents/legal guardians are informed.
- 8.2 Decisions regarding the type of educational and care settings are to be based on the behaviour, neurological development, and physical condition of the student. These decisions will be made using a cross disciplinary/cross sector team approach including, as appropriate, the child's physician, public health personnel, child and family services, the student's parents/legal guardians and division personnel. In each case, potential risks and benefits to both the infected student and others in the educational setting will be weighed. When appropriate, cross department consultation with division personnel, as well as Alberta Education, may be required.

Legal References: *Alberta Communicable Disease Regulation; Occupational Health and Safety Code and Regulations; Guide to Education ECS to Grade 12; School Act Section 18, 20, 45, 45.1, 60, 61, 113; Emergency Medical Aid Act; Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; Health Information Act Occupational Health and Safety Act; Public Health Act; Occupational Health & Safety Manual.*