



Indigenous Services
Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada



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To: Chiefs and Councils, Education and Health Directors of First Nations in Saskatchewan

Subject: **Guidance on COVID-19 and Back to School**

With the end of summer comes the return to school and, thankfully, it is a much different world from a public health perspective than last fall. Widespread uptake of COVID-19 vaccine has meant that children can return to school and many of their favourite activities. **The pandemic is not yet over** and everyone needs to remain cautious and take steps to prevent a resurgence.

All Public Health Orders have been lifted and schools do not need to enforce mandatory masking or check the vaccination status of their employees. However, schools have an important role to play in keeping our communities safe. We strongly suggest that any of the measures, put in place to limit the spread of COVID-19, be maintained. Specifically, we recommend seven priority actions.

1. Make it a policy for students or staff who are sick with COVID-19, cold or flu symptoms to stay home until symptoms have gone away.
2. Continue with enhanced hand hygiene. Encourage washing of hands or using sanitizer many times during the school day.
3. Encourage mask wearing when physical distancing is not possible – such as in crowded hallways or on buses. Support wearing a mask anytime in school and give families the ability to make this decision for their students.
4. Continue with your enhanced cleaning routine and improve ventilation when possible.
5. Continue to encourage staff and families to use take-home rapid antigen tests twice a week on all household members. Students or staff who test positive should isolate for five days and not return to school until 48 hours after they are symptom free.
6. Encourage all staff to complete their COVID-19 primary vaccinations series, including their first and second booster doses. Booster doses help prevent serious illness if staff or students contract COVID-19 and means they are likely to be able to return to school more quickly.
7. Continue to monitor for increases in school absenteeism over normal attendance. An increase in absenteeism could mean in-school transmission of COVID-19 or other respiratory illness.

Recently, vaccinations for children under five years of age and booster doses for children five to eleven years have been approved. These are now available from your local health centre. Please encourage parents and caregivers to have their children vaccinated as soon as possible, before we are all back indoors full time.

If you have any further questions, please feel free contact your local Community Health Nurse, who can help you develop the COVID-19 response that is best for your school community.

Hope your students and staff have a productive and healthy year.

Respectfully,

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