



COVID-19 support and advice for Health and Safety Representatives

This document is to provide support to Health and Safety Representatives and Local Presidents with health and safety issues at the local level as schools are in the process of reopening. Ensuring health and safety at school sites in a pandemic is unprecedented. The difference now for Health and Safety Representatives and Local Presidents will be to ensure that the employer is meeting their health and safety obligations as mandated by the Provincial Health Officer and WorkSafeBC. Employers need to be assessing the risk of exposure at school sites and implement measures to keep workers safe. If there are unresolved issues at the local level, site-based Health and Safety Representative will need to keep their Local President apprised of the situation. The Local President will follow up with school district management. In districts, where there is a District Occupational Health and Safety Committee, the health and safety chair and/or union representatives will need to share district health and safety updates with site-based Health and Safety Representatives in a timely manner.

Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committees

The information below from WorkSafeBC emphasizes the important role of JOHS Committee or worker representative in protecting the workplace against COVID-19. The employer needs to ensure that your JOHS Committee or worker representative is operating effectively:

- Ensure there is a mechanism in place where workers can raise any concerns about the risk of COVID-19 exposure at the workplace to the joint committee or worker representative.
- Have committee members participate in a walk-through assessment of the work process(es) to identify potential areas of increased risk and priority action.
- Ensure that the joint committee or worker representative is involved in the development of control plans for different job tasks.
- Get your joint committee involved in promoting approved social distancing measures.
- Have your joint committee provide feedback on the effectiveness of control measures implemented.
- Joint committees must continue to meet regularly as required under the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation. Consider holding meetings remotely for some or all participants, through the use of teleconferencing or videoconferencing, to encourage physical distancing.

Clear, concise communication protocols will be key during this time:

- The Health and Safety Representative should communicate health and safety issues to their school based JOHS committee and email their Local President.
- At sites where there is only a worker representative (which may be the school staff representative), the worker representative needs to also email their Local President and should email the BCTF Health and Safety Officer.
- School based JOHS committees will need to meet more frequently during the month of June.
- If committees are not regularly meeting, email your Local President. The Local President will follow up with the BCTF Health and Safety Officer and/or WorkSafeBC.

www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/health-and-safety/covid-19-faqs

Health and safety training and orientation of staff

The information below is provided from WorkSafeBC as part of their Education (K–12) and the protocols for returning to operation. These materials were developed with guidance from the Provincial Health Officer around risk mitigation measures for education providers.

Employers are to provide training for staff on the following:

- The risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the signs and symptoms of the disease.
- Safe work procedures or instruction to be followed, including hand washing and cough/sneeze etiquette.
- How to report an exposure to, or symptoms of COVID-19.
- Changes you've made to work policies, practices, and procedures due to the COVID-19 pandemic and keep records of that training.
- Document COVID-19 related meetings and post minutes at a central location.
- Keep records of instruction and training provided to workers regarding COVID-19, as well as reports of exposure and first aid record.

www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/education

Employer roles and responsibilities

The information below is provided by WorkSafeBC and explains that employers are required to develop a COVID-19 safety plan. This safety plan will outline policies, guidelines, and procedures the employer has put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Employers are required by WorkSafeBC to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan.

- Employers may use the term Exposure Control Plan (ECP).
- Employers must involve joint health and safety committees in identifying protocols for their workplace.
- Employers do not need a formal plan in place to begin operation but are expected to develop it while protecting the safety of your workers.

Employers also have specific roles and responsibilities with regards to communicating health and safety information to employees:

- Remind staff that all health and safety measures in place prior to the pandemic are still in place.
- Attempt to mitigate staff confusion and concerns by communicating essential health and safety information to them in writing before they return to the workplace. If possible, give staff an appropriate amount of time to review this material, and to respond with questions.
- Upon first return to the workplace, hold a health and safety meeting to review workplace practices relating to COVID-19 and other health and safety matters. Additional communication may be required as new information is made available that may affect work practices.
- Daily check-in meeting with workers to provide them with new information and review any concerns.
- Minimize the number of non-essential people coming into the school such as parents and caregivers and contractors.
- Keep parents and caregivers informed about what you are doing in your educational setting regarding taking extra precautions.
- Ensure that workers know how to raise safety concerns. This may be through your joint health and safety committee.

- Establishing a central location where new information is posted relating to COVID-19 in your workplace.

www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/education

www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en

WorkSafeBC

- If you have a health and safety concern that needs WorkSafeBC intervention, contact your Local President.
- The BCTF Health and Safety Officer will support the Local President with WorkSafeBC follow up.

Refusal of unsafe work and the COVID-19

- As a worker, you have basic rights, and one of those rights is to Refuse Unsafe Work.
- Refusing unsafe work is a complex and serious process and before any member take this step it is strongly recommended that get advice from their Local President.
- The staff member may approach a staff representative and/or health and safety representative about Refusal of Unsafe Work. Both representatives need to communicate and ensure that the Local President has been contacted.
- If the refusal of unsafe work process is activated, it can be a stressful and challenging process for the staff member. The staff member will need support from the health and safety representative, school staff representative, and the Local President.
- The Local President will follow up with BCTF Field Service staff. BCTF Field Service staff will follow up with the BCTF Health and Safety Officer, when required.
- Even though, we are in a pandemic, the procedures and process for Refusal of Unsafe Work (as per WorkSafeBC website) are the same. See the summary below:

Report the unsafe condition or procedure

As a worker, you must immediately report the unsafe condition to a supervisor or employer. As a supervisor or employer, you must investigate the matter and fix it if possible. If you decide the worker's concern is not valid, report back to the worker.

If a worker still views work as unsafe after a supervisor or employer has said it is safe to perform a job or task

As a supervisor or employer, you must investigate the problem and ensure any unsafe condition is fixed. This investigation must take place in the presence of the worker and a worker representative of the joint health and safety committee or a worker chosen by the worker's trade union. If there is no safety committee or representing trade union at the workplace, the worker who first reported the unsafe condition can choose to have another worker present at the investigation.

If a worker still views work as unsafe, notify WorkSafeBC

If the matter is not resolved, the worker and the supervisor or employer must contact WorkSafeBC. A prevention officer will then investigate and take steps to find a workable solution.

www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/create-manage/rights-responsibilities/refusing-unsafe-work

www.worksafebc.com/en/law-policy/occupational-health-safety/searchable-ohs-regulation/ohs-regulation/part-03-rights-and-responsibilities#SectionNumber:3.12

Appendices

Ministry of Health:

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/health/about-bc-s-health-care-system/office-of-the-provincial-health-officer/covid-19/covid-19_k-12_school_guidance_-_2020_may_15_-_final.pdf

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-covid-19-health-safety-guidlines.pdf

www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/administration/program-management/safe-caring-and-orderly-schools

www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/education/administration/kindergarten-to-grade-12/safe-caring-orderly/k-12-education-restart-plan.pdf

WorkSafeBC

www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates/covid-19-returning-safe-operation/education

www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/checklist/covid-19-safety-plan?lang=en

www.worksafebc.com/en/about-us/covid-19-updates

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