

## COMMUNICABLE DISEASE PLAN ADDENDUM

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE GUIDELINES HAVE BEEN UPDATED FOR THE JANUARY 2022 RETURN TO SCHOOL BASED ON PUBLIC HEALTH KNOWLEDGE ABOUT THE OMICRON VARIANT.

THIS DOCUMENT FOCUSES ON ADDITIONAL PREVENTION MEASURES TO ENSURE COMPLIANCE WITH K-12 & PROVINCIAL HEALTH OFFICE COMMUNICABLE DISEASE GUIDELINES FOR K – 12 SETTINGS, DECEMBER 29, 2021. THIS ADDENDUM IS APPLICABLE TO ALL ABBOTSFORD SCHOOL DISTRICT SITES UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

### On-going Prevention Measures

Variants of COVID-19 spread the same way as the original COVID-19. That means on-going prevention measures in schools continue to be effective at reducing the risk of COVID-19 spreading. This includes:

- Everyone eligible getting fully vaccinated
- Completing a daily health check & staying home when sick
- Washing hands & practicing proper respiratory etiquette
- Wearing masks

### Additional Prevention Measures

Additional Prevention Measures		
Prevention Measures		Implementation and Examples
<b>Space Arrangement</b>	Maximize space between people.	Different common space, classroom, and learning environment configurations (e.g., different desk and table formations).  Limit and, whenever possible, avoid face-to-face seating arrangements.
	Implement strategies that prevent crowding during class transition and break times.	Stagger start/stop times, or recess/snack, lunch and class transition times.  Regular learning activities that bring together multiple classes (e.g., examinations, physical education) should be spread out across multiple locations/spaces whenever possible, but do not need to be reduced in size.
<b>Staff Only Spaces</b>	Hold staff-only gatherings (e.g., staff meetings, in-service and professional development activities) virtually.	

### Additional Prevention Measures

Prevention Measures		Implementation and Examples
<b>School Gatherings &amp; Events (including Extracurricular)</b>	<p>Hold school gatherings and events (e.g., assemblies, parent-teacher interviews, etc.) virtually.</p> <p>If gatherings and events must be in-person (e.g., inter-school sports game, theatre productions), minimize the number of people in attendance as much as possible, do not exceed 50% operating capacity, and do not allow spectators.</p>	For indoor spaces without a defined operating capacity, schools should determine a capacity limit that is at most half the number of individuals that would be within the space for that activity or event if prevention measures weren't in place.
<b>Visitor Access</b>	Limit visitors to those that are supporting activities that are of direct benefit to student learning and wellbeing	E.g., teacher candidates, immunizers, meal program volunteers, etc.
<b>Sports</b>	Extracurricular sports tournaments should be paused.	<p>Sports tournaments are a single or multi-day gathering of three or more sports teams, who come together outside regular league play for the purpose of teams playing against multiple other teams, but does not include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A gathering where team members compete on an individual basis against members of other teams, or</li> </ul> <p>A gathering where the result will decide if a team will advance to play in a national or international competition.</p>
<b>Masks</b>	<p>The <a href="#">PHO Order – Face Coverings</a> requires all students, staff and visitors to wear a mask indoors at school.</p> <p>Everyone who is able to (i.e., does not have a mask exemption) must wear a mask.</p>	<p>Reminders communicated to students (and their parents/caregivers) and staff that includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Wearing masks at school is required under a public health order.</li> <li><a href="#">Proper fit</a> is a key factor in mask effectiveness. Masks worn at school should fit well.</li> <li>Masks are most effective when everyone who is able to is wearing one.</li> <li>Those with mask exemptions continue to follow any strategies identified to reinforce and enhance other safety measures.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those not able to wear a mask all day continue to be encouraged to wear one as much as they're able to.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>

# Communicable disease prevention

## A guide for employers

This guide is not meant for workplaces that are required to have an existing exposure control plan (ECP) related to communicable disease, such as health care employers. See [section 6.34](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation for more information about ECPs.

As COVID-19 vaccinations have become widely available to British Columbians, the overall risk of COVID-19 transmission and serious consequences has diminished. Despite this, the virus will still circulate like other communicable diseases.

This guide provides information for employers to develop a communicable disease plan. An effective plan includes ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable disease and additional measures for when there's an elevated risk of communicable disease.

Managing communicable disease at your workplace is part of an effective [occupational health and safety program](#).

### Communicable disease prevention

A *communicable disease* is an illness caused by an infectious agent or its toxic product that can be transmitted in a workplace from one person to another. Examples of communicable disease that may circulate in a workplace include COVID-19, norovirus, and seasonal influenza.

This guide describes a four-step process to help employers develop a communicable disease plan. This plan does not need to be written, posted, or approved by WorkSafeBC. Your plan may be supported by policies, signage, or other materials as appropriate to your workplace and the level of risk. Some employers may benefit from documenting their plan to assist in planning and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. A template is provided at the end of this guide for that purpose.

#### Step 1: Understand the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk of communicable

disease transmission in your workplace. It also involves implementing additional measures when advised to do so by Public Health during periods of elevated risk.

The level of risk of certain communicable diseases, including COVID-19, may increase from time to time or on a seasonal basis. This may occur at a local or regional level, or within a certain workplace.

- ✓ Monitor and review communicable disease-related information issued by your regional medical health officer or the [provincial health officer](#) if it's related to your industry, region, or workplace. This includes orders, guidance, notices, and recommendations issued by a medical health officer or the provincial health officer.

#### Step 2: Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk

##### Ongoing measures — Maintain at all times

As an employer, you must implement and maintain the following measures at all times.

- ✓ Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of a communicable disease (e.g., fever or chills, coughing, diarrhea) so they can avoid being at the workplace when sick.
- ✓ Provide hand-hygiene facilities with appropriate supplies (see [section 4.85](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to [wash their hands](#) regularly and to [cover coughs and sneezes](#).
- ✓ Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.
- ✓ Make sure building [ventilation](#) is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more

information, see [section 4.72](#) of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

- ✔ Support employees in receiving [vaccinations for COVID-19](#) and other vaccine-preventable conditions.

### **Additional measures — Implement as advised by Public Health**

During a period of elevated risk, the medical health officer or provincial health officer will provide information and guidance about the risk and how you can reduce it. The measures that you'll need to implement will depend on the type of disease and the methods of transmission.

- ✔ Follow all direction from medical health officers and your regional health authority.
- ✔ Follow all orders, guidance, recommendations, and notices issued by the [provincial health officer](#) that are relevant to your industry, region, or workplace.
- ✔ Depending on the guidance that public health officials provide, you may need to assess the workplace to identify areas, activities, and processes that may pose a risk to workers. You may also need to implement appropriate control measures to reduce the risk, following the direction of Public Health. WorkSafeBC has maintained key [COVID-19 protocols](#) that you can refer to. You can use these as appropriate and as advised by Public Health during periods of increased risk.

### **Step 3: Communicate measures, practices, and policies**

Make sure everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, receives information about your measures, practices, and policies for managing communicable disease. A template is provided at the end of this guide that employers may find useful for this purpose.

- ✔ Ensure all workers understand the measures in place at your workplace.
- ✔ Provide all your workers with information on policies for staying home when sick and working from home. The following resources are available for employers to support workers

working from home:

- [Working from home: A guide to keeping your workers healthy and safe](#)
- [Setting up, organizing, and working comfortably in your home workspace](#)

- ✔ Post signage in your workplace to support the measures you have in place.
- ✔ Make sure your supervisors are knowledgeable about your measures, practices, and policies, and incorporate these into supervision practices at the workplace.
- ✔ Provide information, signage, and materials to workers in a language they understand.
- ✔ Be mindful that some aspects of managing communicable disease in the workplace may raise privacy and confidentiality issues. Seek advice on these issues as necessary.

### **Step 4: Monitor your workplace and update your plan as necessary**

Continuously evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.

- ✔ [Joint health and safety committees](#) and worker representatives play an important role in identifying and resolving workplace health and safety issues. When identifying and resolving safety issues, involve joint health and safety committees or worker health and safety representatives (or, in smaller workplaces, other workers).
- ✔ Use workplace inspections and ongoing supervision in the workplace to ensure measures are functioning properly, followed, and maintained.
- ✔ Monitor the guidance, notices, orders, and recommendations from Public Health (as required in Step 1). Adjust your plan as necessary.
- ✔ Monitor your workplace and risk level.
- ✔ Change your measures, practices, and policies as necessary.
- ✔ Update your plan to reflect changes in your workplace, including work processes, staff, and premises.
- ✔ Make sure workers know how to raise health and safety concerns

# Communicable disease prevention planning template

The following template may be useful for employers in documenting and communicating their communicable disease prevention measures, practices, and policies. This is an optional resource, and may be used or adapted as suited to the individual employer.

## Step 1: Understand the risk

Preventing communicable disease involves taking ongoing measures to reduce the risk for communicable disease transmission in the workplace.

## Step 2: Implement measures, practices, and policies to reduce the risk

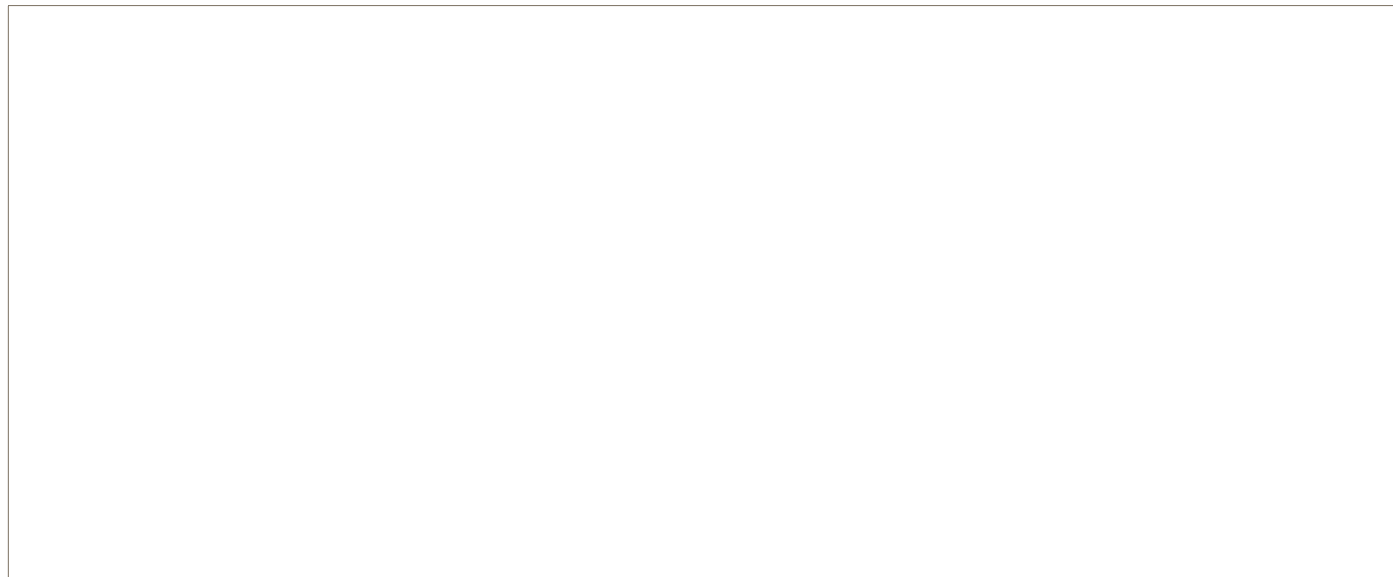
### Ongoing measures

Implement policies to support staff who have symptoms of communicable disease so they can avoid being in the workplace when sick.

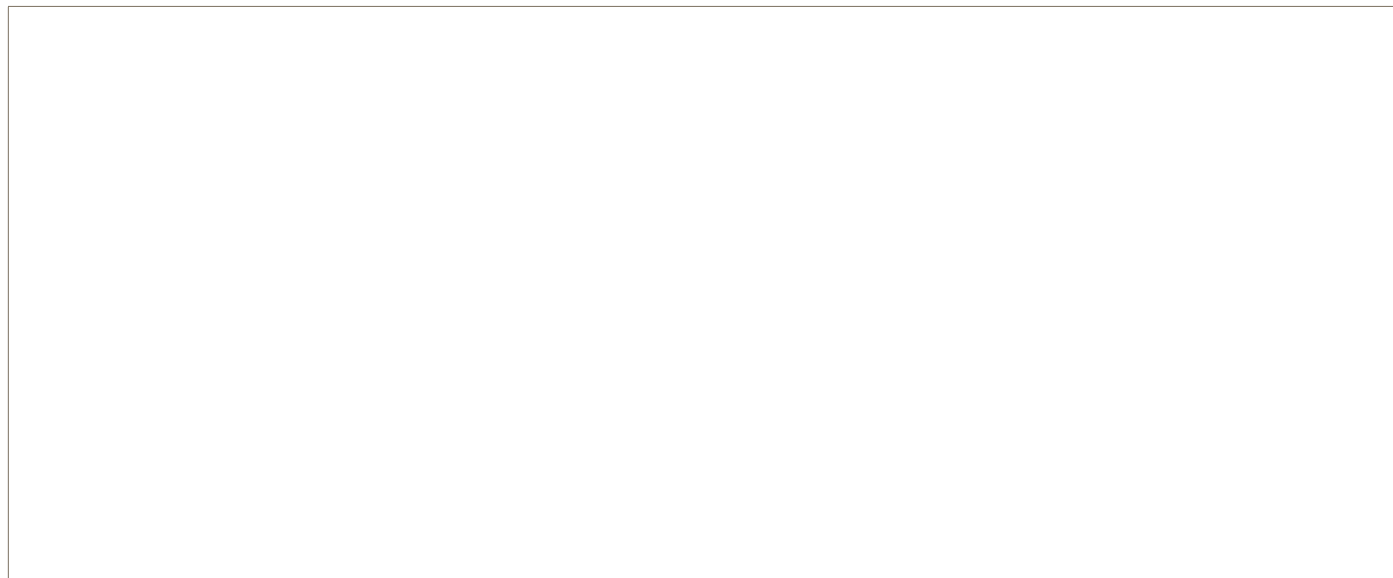
Provide hand-hygiene facilities and appropriate supplies (see section 4.85 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation). Use policies and signage to remind workers to wash their hands and to cover coughs and sneezes.

The following resources may be of use to employers in communicating appropriate practices around the workplace:

- [Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Handwashing](#)
- [Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Cover coughs and sneezes](#)



Maintain a clean environment through routine cleaning processes that are appropriate for your industry and work practices.

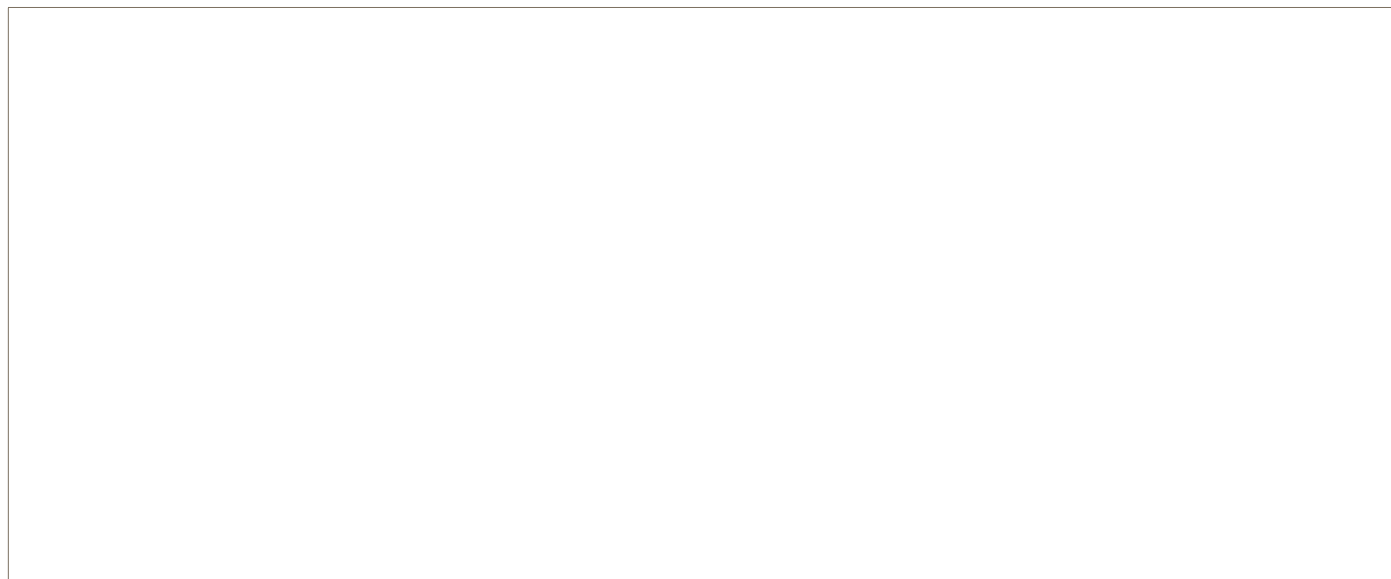


Make sure building ventilation is adequate and ventilation systems are properly maintained and functioning as designed. For more information, see section 4.72 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation.

For employers without ventilation, or without direct control of their building's ventilation system, they may take other measures to improve air circulation, including opening windows.

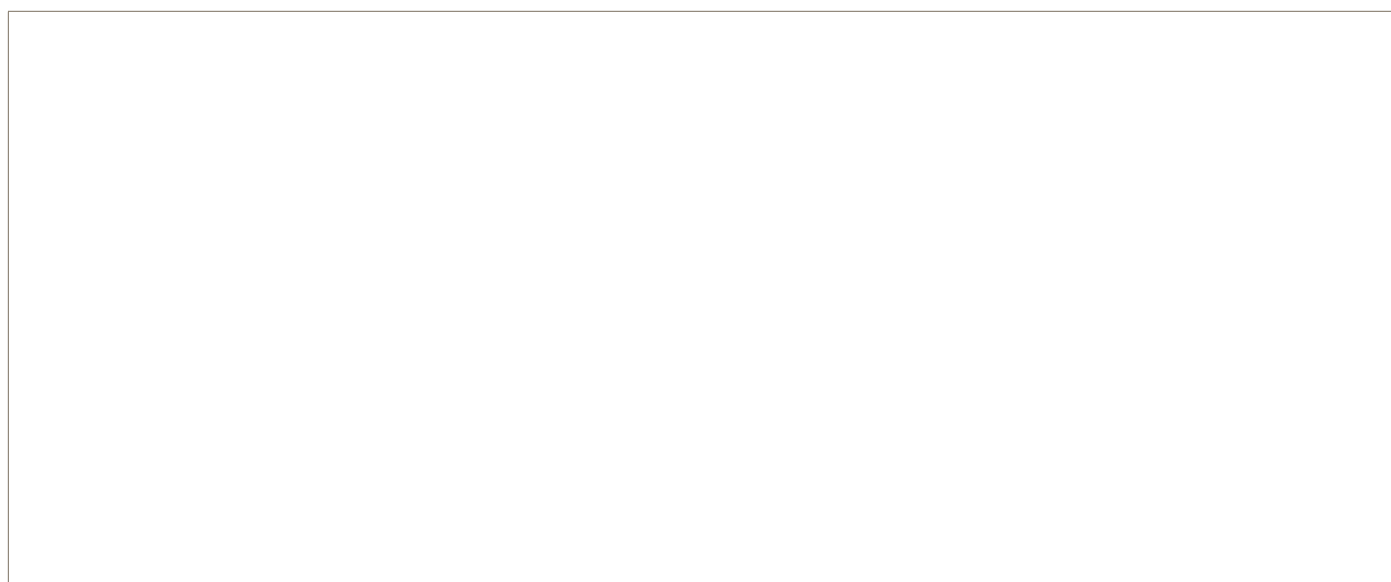
Learn more here:

**Prevent the spread of communicable disease: Ventilation and air circulation.**



### **Additional measures**

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### Step 3: Communicate measures, practices, and policies

Make sure everyone entering the workplace, including workers from other employers, receives information about your measures, practices, and policies for managing communicable disease.

### Step 4: Monitor your workplace and update your plan as necessary

Continually evaluate and update your plan to reflect changing risk levels and work practices.