

## Huron Perth Public Health Instructions for Private Schools

### REVISED DATE: March 5, 2021

This order contains updated requirements from the **Public Health Instructions for Private Schools** issued on August 28, 2020.

To all persons and groups responsible for the operation and / or administration of Private Schools in Huron and Perth Counties, including but not limited to Owners, Operators, Administrators, and Boards of Directors:

**Re: Medical Officer of Health, Huron Perth Public Health, Instructions for the operation and administration of a Private School permitted to be open under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.17 (ROA) and related Regulations, or otherwise.**

This letter outlines public health requirements for private schools that are permitted to be open under the ROA O. Reg 364/20 – Rules for Areas in Stage 3 or other such legislation, or that are otherwise open. The purpose of this letter is to highlight your responsibilities. Huron Perth Public Health is committed to supporting private schools during re-opening and will provide supplementary advice and resources when it becomes available to us.

As the Medical Officer of Health, the following are my Instructions, pursuant to O. Reg 364/20 s.2(2) made under the Reopening Ontario (A Flexible Response to COVID-19) Act, 2020, to all persons and groups responsible for the operation and / or administration of Private Schools in Huron and Perth Counties that are permitted to be open within the Huron Perth Public Health service area. These Instructions come into effect at 12:01 a.m. March 5, 2021 or five school days after receipt, whichever is later.

**Under this Instruction**, all persons and groups responsible for the operation and /or administration of Private Schools in Huron and Perth Counties are **required to ensure that the following measures are implemented in order to provide a safe and healthy school environment for staff, students and visitors and to safeguard the broader communities in which they live.**

**All private schools are required, at a minimum, to implement the following protection strategies to prevent COVID-19:**

#### 1. Screening

- Ensure daily screening of their staff, students, and visitors before arriving at or entering the school.
- Ensure any staff, students, and visitors experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 do not attend school or if present at school, are asked to leave and are requested to seek appropriate medical attention from a family doctor or nurse practitioner. This may include assessment of symptoms and/or testing.
- Ensure staff, students, and visitors feeling sick do not enter the school while waiting for assessment of symptoms and/or test results.
- If you are aware of a symptomatic individual who has tested positive for COVID-19, ensure that person does not attend school until allowed to do so as per public health direction.
- Any household members (siblings) of someone experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19 must not attend school.

## **2. Management of outbreaks in the school setting or community**

- Immediately report any suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 within the school to Huron Perth Public Health.
- Follow all instructions of the local Medical Officer of Health, or designate, in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak either associated with the school or local community.

## **3. Cleaning standards and protocols**

- Ensure cleaning and disinfection activities at the school meet current public health requirements.
- Develop a cleaning and disinfection policy that includes information/instructions on the following:
  - Cleaning products
  - Cleaning programs
  - High touch surfaces, including bathrooms
  - Outdoor surfaces
  - Shared objects

## **4. Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette**

- Ensure staff, students, and visitors are routinely washing their hands, which may include the use of alcohol-based hand rub where hand washing facilities are not available.
- Place alcohol-based hand rub in easily accessible locations throughout the school, preferably at school and classroom entrances.
- Ensure students are trained on appropriate respiratory etiquette (i.e., cough and sneeze manners, such as coughing into sleeve) and hand hygiene, including the use of alcohol-based hand rub, and to reinforce its use.

## **5. Masks**

- Ensure students in Grades 1 to 12 (approximate age 6 and up) wear non-medical or cloth masks indoors in school, including in hallways and during classes, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions.<sup>1</sup>
- Use outdoor activities like recess as an opportunity to provide students with breaks from wearing masks where they are able to physically distance (2 metres/6 ft) from others.
- Encourage students in Kindergarten to wear masks in indoor spaces, and outdoors where physical distance can't be maintained
- Ensure all school-based staff wear medical masks and eye protection, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions. Where medical masks are not available, staff can wear non-medical masks (e.g., cloth masks).
- All visitors should wear medical masks, with reasonable exceptions for medical conditions. Where medical masks are not available, visitors can wear non-medical masks (e.g., cloth masks).

## **6. Cohorting<sup>2</sup>**

- Ensure elementary students are cohorted (grouped together) with their classmates and teacher for the entire school day (including recess and lunch) with limited contact with other teachers, staff and students.
- Ensure secondary students are limited to approximately 100 student contacts. In order to achieve this, adapted timetables and/or remote delivery of classes may be required.

## **7. Musical Instruction**

- If the teaching or instruction involves singing or the playing of brass or wind instruments:
  - Separate every person who is singing or playing a wind or brass instrument from every other person by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier.

## 8. Distancing

- Remove all unnecessary furniture and place desks/tables with as much distancing as possible and to allow teachers with as much teaching space as possible. Aim for at least two metres (six feet) between desks.
- Place desks facing forward, not in circles or groupings.
- Locate larger classes in spaces that can accommodate distancing. This would include available space in the school such as gyms and libraries.
- Distancing must occur in all areas of the school, including washrooms.

## 9. Record keeping

- Ensure records of classes, including seating charts, bus cohorts, and daily records of any approved visitors to the school, including supply/occasional teachers or custodians are maintained and are readily available to public health for contact tracing purposes.

## 10. Transportation/busing

- Assign seats and keep a record of the seating plan. Ensure students who live in the same household or are in the same classroom cohort are seated together.

## 11. Visitors

- Limit or prohibit visitors to the school, with the exception of visits to ensure school safety, such as inspections by the Fire Marshal's office or by public health.
- Ensure any visitors to the school are screened for illness and wear a medical mask while on school premises.

Huron Perth Public Health will be taking a progressive enforcement approach to ensure compliance with these instructions, with enforcement measures focusing on education. As part of this, you may also receive an on site visit at any time. As you are aware, pursuant to the ROA, where significant non-compliance with the above-noted requirements occurs, fines may be issued.

Please be reminded of your responsibilities for general compliance with Ontario Regulation 364/20 – Rules for Areas in Stage 3:

### *General compliance*

*2. (1) The person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall ensure that the business or organization operates in accordance with all applicable laws, including the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the regulations made under it.*

*(2) The person responsible for a business or organization that is open shall operate the business or organization in compliance with the advice, recommendations and instructions of public health officials, including any advice, recommendations or instructions on physical distancing, cleaning or disinfecting.*

The above instructions, in addition to fundamental public health measures, will:

- provide a safe and healthy school environment for staff, students, and visitors, and safeguard the broader communities in which they live
- help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission; and
- allow us all to prepare for the increased interactions that will result from Stage 3 re-openings

These Instructions will be reviewed regularly by Huron Perth Public Health. These Instructions will remain in effect until further notice from Huron Perth Public Health; any decision on an end date will depend on whether legislation still calls for adherence to public health advice, recommendations and instructions, and whether there is still evidence of virus transmission.

School guidance and resources related to these instructions are available on our website at [www.hpph.ca](http://www.hpph.ca). For further information call the HPPH School COVID Team at 1-888-221-2133 ext. 3560 or [schoolcovid@hpph.ca](mailto:schoolcovid@hpph.ca)

I want to thank you for your efforts so far to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and to reinforce with you that it is essential to keep up your vigilance. This is key to ensuring continued safe operation of your school as well as contributing to a successful community reopening and to safeguard against novel coronavirus (COVID-19) circulation.

Sincerely,



Miriam Klassen, MD, MPH  
Medical Officer of Health and CEO  
Huron Perth Public Health

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<sup>1</sup>According to the Huron Perth and Area Ontario Health Team Physician Advisory Council, the following circumstances which do warrant consideration of a mask exemption:

- People, especially children, with severe sensory processing disorders
- Patients with facial deformities that are incompatible with masking
- Children less than 2 years of age
- Children less than 5 years of age (cognitively or developmentally) who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to
- People with PTSD who are triggered by a face covering
- Extreme agoraphobia/asphyxia phobia (which is longstanding predating COVID 19)
- People with cognitive impairment, intellectual deficiency or autism spectrum disorder
- For who wearing a face covering will cause severe distress or disorganization
- People unable to apply or remove a face covering without help
- People with accommodations under the Ontario Human Rights Code or the Accessibility
- For Ontarians with a Disabilities Act that would pertain to wearing a face covering (i.e immobilization in a wheelchair would not qualify unless the person also cannot put on or take off their own mask).

<sup>2</sup> Cohorting refers to the practice of keeping students together in a small group throughout their school day, with limited exposure to multiple teachers or a wide variety of classmates.