

Public Health Considerations for School Bus Transportation During the COVID-19 Pandemic: First Nations in Alberta

The purpose of this document is to offer recommended measures to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the context of school bus operations and protect both students and drivers. The recommendations and guidance in this document are subject to change, based on the evolution of transmission of COVID-19 and the discovery of new evidence.

Drivers, teachers or students who are suspected and/or confirmed COVID-19 positive should not attend work or come to school. Wherever possible, alternative transportation to school is encouraged. Parents/caregivers/students may provide their own transportation, such as carpooling (only when a part of the same cohort), to avoid possible virus exposure on the bus.

How coronavirus (COVID-19) spreads

Human coronaviruses cause infections of the nose, throat and lungs. They are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- droplets made when you cough, sneeze, sing or laugh
- having close, prolonged personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands
- touching something with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hands

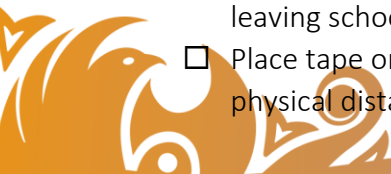
Symptoms are similar to what you may get with influenza or other respiratory illnesses. COVID-19 symptoms may take up to 14 days to appear after exposure to the virus.

Most common symptoms: fever, cough, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, shortness of breath and/or difficulty breathing.

Less common symptoms: chills, painful swallowing, headache, joint and muscle aches, tiredness (mild or severe), nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, not feeling hungry, loss of sense of smell or taste and/or pink eye.

Before the Trip:

- ☐ Stock the bus with the required supplies – see *Appendix A: Supplies*.
- ☐ Thoroughly clean and disinfect all high touch surfaces as per the procedures noted in *Appendix B: Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures*.
- ☐ Develop a daily list of passengers who ride the bus on each route. See *Appendix E* for a template.
- ☐ Develop a seating plan. See *Appendix D* for a seating plan template.
 - Students should be assigned seats and a record of this seating plan should be kept in order to assist with contact tracing in the event there is a COVID-19 positive individual.
 - Students who live in the same household should be seated together.
 - When developing seating plans take into consideration that buses should be loaded from back to front, and unloaded from front to back.
- ☐ Children should be reminded by parents or teachers to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds before they leave home to take the bus, when they arrive at school, when they are leaving school prior to taking the bus, and when they get home.
- ☐ Place tape or other markings on the bus floors and/or seats to demonstrate to students a 2 metre physical distancing



- ❑ Consider posting signage at the entry of the bus to remind students and staff to not enter the bus if they have symptoms and reminders of respiratory etiquette, including cover coughs and sneezes, avoid touching your face, dispose of used tissues promptly and practice hand hygiene. The following are some examples of posters you can use.
 - [My Mask Your Mask](#)
 - [Stay Safe](#)
 - [Do Not Enter](#)
 - [Cover you Cough](#)
- ❑ The driver, staff and students (parents/school representative) are to complete the screening questionnaire daily for each person and continuously monitor themselves for any symptoms of COVID-19. See *Appendix C: Alberta Screening Questionnaire*.
 - Students with symptoms of COVID-19 must not attend school or be passengers on the bus. Drivers with symptoms must not attend work.
- ❑ Provide the driver with a protective zone. This may include: 2 metre physical distance, physical barrier, or a non-medical face mask. See [CMOH Order 33-2020](#).
 - School bus operators may consider adding a physical barrier, such as a Plexiglass shield, to limit direct contact and exposure to the virus between the driver and children during boarding and off-loading the school bus.
 - When installation of a physical barrier is not possible, maintain a 2 metre physical distance by blocking off the front seats and/or wear a non-medical face mask.
 - Considerations if a physical barrier is used:
 - The barrier should not have exposed sharp edges and should remain fixed in place either when in use or if stored away, while the vehicle is in motion.
 - Ensure the barrier does not create undesired reflections that could limit the driver's visibility. Reflections could also be limited by including a mechanism like a sun visor that the driver can engage/disengage as needed throughout a trip.
 - Ensure that school buses remain compliant with all applicable Canada Motor Vehicle Safety Standards under the Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations and to applicable CSA D250 Standards, including those for glazing, flammability and compartmentalization. For aftermarket installations of barriers the provincial and territorial authorities maintain jurisdiction and are responsible for setting and enforcing any requirements.
 - For additional information with respect to safety considerations when deciding to install a barrier with the intent to protect a school bus driver from exposure to COVID-19, please refer to the joint Transport Canada and Canada Standard Association D250 Technical Committee at: <https://www.tc.gc.ca/en/services/road/joint-guidance-document-transport-canada-csa-d250-school-bus-technical-committee.html>

During the Trip:

- ❑ Open windows and/or roof vents to allow for increased ventilation when possible and as weather permits.
- ❑ Only drivers, staff and students are permitted to enter the bus.

- ☐ Maintain 2 metre physical distancing when lining up to get on the bus, when seated, and when exiting the bus. Children in the same cohort do not need to physically distance.
- ☐ Load the bus from back to front and unload from front to back.
 - When unloading, one student or household should stand up and exit at a time to minimize close contact between students.
 - Passengers are to sit in assigned seating – household members and members of the same cohort can sit together. Others should be separated (may need to block off some seats).
- ☐ Maintain a daily list of passengers who ride the bus on each route. See Appendix E for a template.
- ☐ All school bus passengers (grade 4-12) are required to wear a non-medical mask. See [CMOH Order 33-2020](#). These should be put on before getting on the bus. Students in lower grades may also wear non-medical masks. Refer to [Guidelines on how to wear a mask](#).
 - Drivers are required to wear a non-medical mask when they cannot physically distance and/or do not have a physical barrier.
 - A very small number of individuals may not be able to wear masks due to sensory or health issues. Face shields are not considered to be equivalent to non-medical face masks. It is important to follow other personal preventative practices such as frequent hand hygiene and physical distancing as much as possible.
 - Discuss alternate options with the school principal, supervisor/manager, or other applicable individual if physical distancing is not possible.
- ☐ Perform hand hygiene upon entry onto the bus by applying hand sanitizer (60% alcohol or more) and rub until hands are dry.
 - Avoid touching face, eyes, nose or mouth, especially with unwashed hands.
 - Cough and sneeze into a tissue, or sleeve if a tissue is not available. Do not cough and sneeze into hands. Dispose of tissue in a no-touch waste receptacle and wash or sanitize hands afterwards.
- ☐ Bus pick-up and drop-off of students at the school should be staggered where possible, to avoid crowding at the school entrance.
- ☐ If a child becomes symptomatic during the bus trip, and is not wearing a mask, provide a mask. The driver should contact the school to make the appropriate arrangements to pick up the child/student.

After the Trip:

- ☐ **Clean** and **disinfect** all surfaces as per the procedures outlined in *Appendix B: Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures*.
 - It is recommended that vehicle cleaning logs be kept – for an example see Cleaning Checklist in Appendix B.
- ☐ Concerns regarding exposure to symptomatic individuals should be directed to 811 Alberta Health Link or the local health centre.
- ☐ Bus drivers who start to experience symptoms should stay home, self-isolate, and advise their employer so that additional steps can be taken to protect others.
 - Drivers/staff experiencing symptoms should take the [AHS on-line self assessment](#), call 811 Alberta Health Link, or contact the local health centre.

References:

Government of Alberta. School Re-entry Plan (2020-21 school year): <https://www.alberta.ca/k-to-12-school-re-entry-2020-21-school-year.aspx>
 Transport Canada. Federal Guidance for School bus Operations during the COVID-19 Pandemic <https://www2.tc.gc.ca/en/services/road/federal-guidance-school-bus-operations-during-covid-19-pandemic.html>
 PHAC. Annex: Environmental Sanitation Practices for Airlines to Control the Spread of Novel Coronavirus

APPENDIX A: Supplies

Ensure each bus is **supplied with**:

- ☐ Seats made of a smooth and non-absorbent material (e.g. vinyl or leather) which are free from breaks, cracks, open seams, chops, pits and similar imperfections.
- ☐ Small garbage bin with liners and lid; if possible, use a non-touch garbage bin apply hand sanitizer after touching the lid.
- ☐ Alcohol based hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or more) – at least 2 bottles: one for driver and one student(s) entering the bus
- ☐ Household cleaner/detergent
- ☐ Disinfectant – Hard-surface disinfectants or cleaning agents may be transported on a bus providing the product is secured and not accessible to students (maximum of 1 litre).
- ☐ Non-medical masks
- ☐ Personal Protective equipment (as per OHS and disinfectant label recommendations). Guidance for Personal Protective Equipment and their uses by Commercial Vehicle Drivers is available at this link: <https://tc.canada.ca/en/covid-19-measures-updates-guidance-issued-transport-canada/personal-protective-equipment-their-uses-commercial-vehicle-drivers>
 - Disposable gloves
 - If cleaning in the presence of blood or body fluids or cleaning following a symptomatic individual contact Community Health Nurse for required PPE.
- ☐ Disposable cloth/paper towels, tissues

APPENDIX B: Cleaning and Disinfection Procedures

What is Cleaning and Disinfection?

Cleaning refers to the removal of visible dirt, grime and impurities. Cleaning does not kill germs but helps remove them from the surface. **Clean** all frequently touched surfaces to remove visible dirt; use regular household soap or detergent and water.

Disinfecting refers to using a chemical to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. **Disinfect** all frequently touched surfaces to kill germs and viruses on surfaces; most effective after surfaces are cleaned

- ☐ Commercial **disinfectant** that has a Drug Identification Number (DIN) and a virucidal claim (removes 99.9 % of viruses, bacteria). Follow the instructions on the label ([List of Hard-surface disinfectants](#)); or
- ☐ Bleach water solution: **mix 20 mL (4 teaspoons) unscented bleach and 1000 mL (4 cups) water** in a labelled spray bottle. Prepare a new solution daily.
- ☐ **Alternatively**, a combined cleaner/disinfectant product could be used.

1. Steps for Cleaning and Disinfecting:

1. Wash hands and put on recommended **personal protective equipment**. Always wear closed shoes/boots and disposable gloves.
2. Avoid touching your face, eyes, nose, and mouth.
3. Avoid direct contact with body fluids. If body fluids are present (nose/mouth excretions, blood, vomit, diarrhea, etc.) contact Community Health Nurse for guidance.
4. Clean visibly soiled surfaces with detergent/cleaner. Use only disposable cloths (paper towels or wipes).
5. Clean all **frequently touched surfaces** as per the **Cleaning Checklist** - see following page.
6. Place used paper towels in a non-touch garbage bin.
7. Apply disinfectant to the surface as per manufacturers' instructions. Surface should be moist. Allow to air dry.
8. Remove gloves, and any other personal protective equipment as per recommended protocol, and dispose of them in non-touch garbage bin.
9. Dispose of waste daily.
10. Perform hand hygiene after removal of PPE. Washing with soap and water or hand sanitizer (60% alcohol content or higher).

Checklist for Cleaning School Buses following each bus route

Vehicle Licence Plate: _____

[illegible]

APPENDIX C: COVID-19 ALBERTA HEALTH DAILY CHECKLIST (FOR CHILDREN UNDER 18)

Overview

This checklist applies for all children, as well as all students who attend kindergarten to Grade 12, including high school students over 18. Children should be screened every day by completing this checklist before going to school, child care or other activities. Children may need a parent or guardian to assist them to complete this screening tool.

Screening Questions

1. Has the child:

(Choose any/all possible exposures)

Traveled outside Canada in the last 14 days? When entering or returning to Alberta from outside Canada, individuals are legally required to quarantine for 14 days unless enrolled in the Alberta COVID-19 International Border Pilot Project	YES	NO
Had close contact with a case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days? Face-to-face contact within 2 metres for 15 minutes or longer, or direct physical contact such as hugging	YES	NO
If the child answered "YES" to any of the above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child is required to quarantine for 14 days from the last day of exposure. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the child is participating in the Alberta COVID-19 International Border Pilot Project, they must comply with the program restrictions at all times. If the child develops any symptoms, use the AHS Online Assessment Tool or call Health Link 811 to determine if testing is recommended. 		
If the child answered "NO" to both of the above: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proceed to question 2. 		

2. Does the child have any new onset (or worsening) of the following core symptoms:

Fever Temperature of 38 degrees Celsius or higher	YES	NO
Cough Continuous, more than usual, not related to other known causes or conditions such as asthma	YES	NO
Shortness of breath Continuous, out of breath, unable to breathe deeply, not related to other known causes or conditions such as asthma	YES	NO
Loss of sense of smell or taste Not related to other known causes or conditions like allergies or neurological disorders	YES	NO
If the child answered "YES" to any symptom in question 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The child is to isolate for 10 days from onset of symptoms. Use the AHS Online Assessment Tool or call Health Link 811 to arrange for testing and to receive additional information on isolation. 		
If the child answered "NO" to all of the symptoms in question 2: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proceed to question 3. 		

3. Does the child have any new onset (or worsening) of the following other symptoms:

Chills Without fever, not related to being outside in cold weather	YES	NO
Sore throat/painful swallowing Not related to other known causes/conditions, such as seasonal allergies or reflux	YES	NO
Runny nose/congestion Not related to other known causes/conditions, such as seasonal allergies or being outside in cold weather	YES	NO
Feeling unwell/fatigued Lack of energy, poor feeding in infants, not related to other known causes or conditions, such as depression, insomnia, thyroid dysfunction or sudden injury	YES	NO
Nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea Not related to other known causes or conditions, such as anxiety, medication or irritable bowel syndrome	YES	NO
Unexplained loss of appetite Not related to other known causes or conditions, such as anxiety or medication	YES	NO
Muscle/joint aches Not related to other known causes or conditions, such as arthritis or injury	YES	NO
Headache Not related to other known causes or conditions, such as tension-type headaches or chronic migraines	YES	NO
Conjunctivitis (commonly known as pink eye)	YES	NO
<p>If the child answered “YES” to ONE symptom in question 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your child home and monitor for 24 hours. • If their symptom is improving after 24 hours, they can return to school and activities when they feel well enough to go. Testing is not necessary. • If the symptom does not improve or worsens after 24 hours (or if additional symptoms emerge), use the AHS Online Assessment Tool or call Health Link 811 to check if testing is recommended. <p>If the child answered “YES” to TWO OR MORE symptoms in question 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your child home. • Use the AHS Online Assessment Tool or call Health Link 811 to determine if testing is recommended. • Your child can return to school and activities once their symptoms go away as long as it has been at least 24 hours since their symptoms started. <p>If the child answered “NO” to all questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your child may attend school, child care and/or other activities. 		

Please note: If your child is experiencing any symptoms from the lists above, do not bring them to visit a continuing care or acute care facility for 10 days from when symptoms started/until symptoms resolve (whichever is longer), unless they receive a negative COVID-19 test result and feel better.

APPENDIX D: School Bus Seating Plan Template

When developing a seating plan aim to maintain 2 metre physical distancing when lining up to get on the bus, when seated, and when exiting the bus.

- All students should be assigned a seat.
- Students who live in the same household should be seated together.
- Students within the same cohort do not need to physically distance.


A record of this seating plan should be kept in order to assist with contact tracing in the event there is a COVID-19 positive individual. Update the seating plan as needed.

Also take into consideration that buses should be loaded from back to front, and unloaded from front to back.

Date: _____

School (s): _____

Bus Number/Route: _____

Left Front	Aisle	Right Front
 Bus Driver Name:	Row	Door
	1	
	2	
	3	
	4	
	5	
	6	
	7	
	8	
	9	
	10	
	11	
	12	
	13	
	14	
	Emergency Exit	
	Back	

APPENDIX E: School Bus Daily Log Sheet

Maintain a daily list of passengers who ride the bus on each route.

A record of this log sheet should be kept for a minimum of 2 weeks in order to assist with contact tracing in the event there is a COVID-19 positive individual.

Week of: _____

School(s): _____

Bus Number/Route: _____

	Monday		Tuesday		Wednesday		Thursday		Friday	
Driver Name:										
Student Name	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM	AM	PM
1										
2										
3										
4										
5										
6										
7										
8										
9										
10										
11										
12										
13										
14										
15										
16										
17										
18										
19										
20										
21										
22										
23										
24										
25										
26										
27										
28										
29										
30										
31										
32										
33										
34										

[illegible]

