

COVID-19 DECISION-MAKING GUIDE

DECEMBER 14 UPDATE



The following information is designed to provide the public with a greater understanding of the process Lethbridge School Division Board of Trustees and central administration use to determine if the Division can ease COVID-19 protocols in schools.

As always, the overriding principle is the safety of students, staff, the school community and the larger community. Each month the Board considers information in the following categories:

CATEGORY 1: GOVERNMENT GUIDANCE

Has Alberta Health Services provided any new direction or guidance?

- No, but cases have declined steadily across the province. Currently there are 367 hospitalizations (71 in ICU), with a positivity rate of 3.75 per cent.

Has Alberta Education provided any new direction or guidance?

- No.

Has OH&S provided any new direction or guidance?

- The Vaccination Procedure addresses OH & S requirements for instituting measures to keep a safe work place.

Other guidelines (ASAA for example)

- In school sport practices and inter-school games can occur. It is strongly recommended that all participants go through screening before participating in activities.
- All sport competitions are operating and specific guidelines with spectators are occurring at the school/division level using the Division Restriction Exemption Program.
- Coaches and trainers have to adhere to masking and physical distancing, and individuals not participating in physical activity such as coaches and trainers wear masks at all times
- Physical Distancing: AHS Guidelines suggest 2 m distancing to be followed on the sideline and when not in competition
- Exception: Coaches or trainers may enter physical distancing space for brief interactions with participants to correct form or technique.
- Masks: masks for athletes are encouraged to be worn at all times when entering facilities or accessing public spaces; athletes can only take off their masks when engaged in physical activity
- Change rooms: Access must be limited including accelerated arrival/departure, for emergencies and for washroom use

CATEGORY 2: COVID-19 CASES IN LETHBRIDGE

How many active cases are there in Lethbridge?

- o Active case counts in Lethbridge.
 - Trend in Lethbridge: Feb. 21 (205); March 21 (502); April 18 (462); May 24 (201); Sept. 27 (451); Oct. 29 (282); Nov. 19 (139); Dec. 10 (84)

CATEGORY 3: COVID-19 CASES IN SCHOOLS

Are there known COVID-19 diagnosis in any schools?

- Yes. Alberta Health Services has restarted student reports with COVID positive cases. Classes are not excluded from in-person learning format until 3 cases in a cohort are positive within 5 days. We have had 2 classes at the elementary and one at the middle school level pivot to online learning since CMOH or 40-2021 has been implemented.

Has AHS mandated that staff in any school isolate due to possible exposure at school?

- No. Close contacts are no longer required to isolate, but are recommended to rapid test and monitor for possible symptoms. Staff who are unvaccinated and exposed are expected by AHS to quarantine.

Has AHS mandated that students isolate in any school?

- Only positive cases are required to stay home unless AHS has implemented an exclusion.

Is AHS conducting contact tracing in any schools?

- AHS continues to work closely with Lethbridge School Division regarding the notification process.

Is there evidence of COVID-19 transmission within schools?

- AHS no longer provides contact tracing to determine if COVID is being transmitted at school.

CATEGORY 4: ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS AND LEARNING

Insurance – has our insurer given any specific guidelines and/or restrictions that affect the division's position of potential liability?

- Yes; insurer has advised that school divisions should put Vaccination procedures in place. Not doing so puts the Division in jeopardy for additional insurance fees (surcharge) or being removed as a member of the insurance cohort (USIC - Urban Schools Insurance Consortium). All members now have a procedure or policy in place. Standard of due care/diligence in the education sector established by number of jurisdictions that have a procedure provincially and nationally, and recommendations by Ministers of Education and Health as well as the Chief Medical Officer.

How does the student absenteeism rate compare to a non-COVID year?

- The absenteeism is slightly higher than a non-COVID year.

How does the staff absenteeism rate compare to a non-COVID year; is it impacting instruction?

- Staff absenteeism due to illness or COVID symptoms is currently lower compared to September, October, November, December 2020 and slightly higher compared to September, October November 2019. Last year we in late November early December schools moved to online learning, which will impact the absence comparison for December.

Overall, have schools communicated that they support change and have the capacity to assume the additional responsibilities that come with co- and extra-curricular activities?

- Secondary Administrators recognize that the primary consideration and focus in extra-curricular pursuits is student participation, as well as health and well-being of students and the school community. The Restrictions Exemption Program was initiated in September for outdoor sport. Application of the restriction exemption program subsequently moved to indoor sport at the secondary level with strategies specific to the sport or activity will be developed by schools. Specific strategies started with restricting the number of spectators for each participant (two spectators/ participant). More recently, schools have moved to other strategies for some seasonal events such as one-third capacity of the building to increase the number of spectators per participant. School administrators will continue to monitor the trend of COVID, including any new variants, and determine their capacity for fewer strategies at events that limit participants. Secondary administrators plan to review strategies by the end of the second week of return to school so that they can ascertain the impact of the holidays on potential spread of COVID or a variant.

CATEGORY 5: OTHER FACTORS TO CONSIDER

What is the Standard of Care owed to students and staff?

- Guided by MOH, wellness standards, OHS, impact on capacity to maintain Standard of Care required during the pandemic

Political Pressure/ Parent Pressure considerations

- Other Divisions provincially

SUMMARY QUESTIONS

Are there changes from Alberta Health Services, Alberta Education or OH&S that would suggest we need to maintain, enhance or reduce COVID-19 protocols?

- Changes have been implemented as they arise (e.g. masks for all grades). Contact notification is in place as well as the exclusion notification. There are not any indicators that we will be seeing any significant changes at this time.

Does community transmission information suggest we need to maintain, enhance or reduce COVID-19 protocols?

- Maintain all protocols (social distancing, mask wearing, hand washing). Restriction Exemption Program for outdoor activities; Restriction Exemption Program starting to be applied for some indoor events.

Does school COVID-19 information suggest we need to maintain, enhance or reduce COVID-19 protocols?

- Maintain.

Does organizational status information suggest we need to maintain, enhance or reduce COVID-19 protocols?

- Recently our COVID-19 numbers have decreased in Lethbridge and across the province, and we appear to be at or near the end of the fourth wave.