

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

Overview

The guidance provided in this document is intended to support school and school authority leaders in the safe launch of in-person classes and to reduce opportunities for transmission of COVID-19 in September 2020 under Scenario 1 of the Re-Entry Plan.

Schools refer to public, separate, francophone, charter schools, independent (private) school authorities, independent (private) Early Childhood Services (ECS), online/distance education programs, and First Nations education authorities. School-based activities which may be impacted by this guidance include sports, music and field trips into the community or to other schools, care provided outside of regular school hours (e.g. before and after care), professional development/activity days and school break day camps.

Although this information is relevant to all schools, it is recognized that First Nation schools on reserve are a federal responsibility. Information shared with First Nation schools is for information only. For public health information, COVID-19 questions or for reporting purposes, First Nation schools should contact their local Health Centre or Indigenous Services Canada-First Nations or Inuit Health Branch Environmental Public Health Services (ISC-FNIHB) office (see Appendix A), in accordance with normal practice.

There are measures that school settings in Alberta can take to reduce the risk of transmission of respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. Such measures include, but are not limited to, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, physical distancing, increase frequency of cleaning and disinfecting and having staff and children/students stay home when ill are important steps that can support the health and wellbeing of our children/students, staff and community. School authorities, in consultation with their local Medical Officer of Health (MOH), should implement the guidance for schools as applicable to their unique situation.

In addition to the strategies listed above, it is required that all staff and teachers, as well as students in grades 4 to 12 wear non-medical face masks while in shared areas of the school outside of the classroom where physical distancing may not be possible, and on school buses. Staff and students do not have to wear masks while seated in the classroom during instruction where there is appropriate distance between the staff and students, and maximum possible distance between students' desks (as a principle, two metres should be maintained wherever possible). Non-medical face masks for students in kindergarten to grade 3 may be considered, but are not routinely recommended.

Schools/School authorities should establish their own COVID-19 plans prior to reopening schools.

Parents/guardians play an integral role in the screening process for the child's/student's daily involvement in school.

MOHs and their designates are available to support school authorities throughout the province. Their role is to provide guidance on communicable disease risk as well as risk management. If you have concerns, need specific guidance, or have questions about how to apply the

COVID-19 INFORMATION

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

measures in this document, please contact Environmental Public Health in your Zone for assistance (see Appendix B).

Any school authority/school connected to a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 will be contacted by Alberta Health Services (AHS). Public health measures for outbreak management are at the discretion of the Zone Medical Officer of Health (MOH); decisions on the need for alternate instructional delivery plans or school closures will be made by Government in conjunction with local officials.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Building Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A thorough cleaning of school facilities must be completed prior to re-entry.• Many school buildings have had reduced or no water flow through the plumbing water system during the pandemic, leading to the stagnation of water in the pipes. Prior to the launch of summer school, the physical setting should be checked to ensure fresh water replaces the stagnant water in the water lines. Guidance on flushing water systems can be accessed here.• HVAC systems should be checked to ensure good ventilation.• Area rugs and soft furnishings that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected should be removed.• Schools must develop procedures that outline hand hygiene and cleaning requirements for schools and should address:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol is recommended as there is evidence that supports effectiveness against COVID-19. Hand sanitizer can help reduce the risk of infection by, or the spread of microorganisms when hand washing is not possible. If parents have questions about their child using alcohol-based hand sanitizer they should contact their school administration to discuss potential alternatives.○ A supply of hand sanitizer will be distributed to all school authorities. The volume of hand sanitizer that will be provided to an individual school authority will be based on student population.○ Place hand sanitizer in entrances, exits and near high touch equipment such as microwave ovens and vending machines and other high traffic areas.○ High contact surfaces (including water fountains);○ Washrooms;○ Shared equipment;○ Auxiliary spaces and common rooms; and○ Others areas that may apply.• Increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch areas and equipment (e.g. microwave ovens and vending machines) inside and outside classrooms.<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Disinfectants used must have a Drug Information Number (DIN) with a virucidal claim. Alternatively, 1000 ppm bleach solution can be used. More information on cleaning and disinfection can be accessed here.• Students and staff are required to perform hand hygiene when entering and exiting the school as well as before entering the classroom.• Proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette is required and should be regularly promoted among students and staff.
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GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water fountains can remain open. Mouthpieces of drinking fountains are not a major source of virus transmission and require regular cleaning according to manufacturer recommendations. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Water fountain knobs and push buttons are considered high-touch surfaces, and should be regularly cleaned and disinfected. Students should be encouraged to fill water bottles rather than having them drink directly from the mouthpiece of a fountain. • Additional Alberta Health Services resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ AHS Infections Prevention & Control posters ○ Hand Washing Posters (AHS) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poster 1 ▪ Poster 2 ○ How to Hand Wash (AHS) poster ○ How to use alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer (AHS) poster.
<p>Screening</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before leaving home, staff, children/students, visitors, and volunteers who will access the school for work or education, must self-screen for symptoms each day that they enter the school using the Alberta Health Daily Checklist. • Parents and children/students must be provided a copy of the screening tool upon school registration with the expectation that it needs to be completed on a daily basis. • Schools must keep records of children’s known pre-existing conditions. If a child develops symptoms that could be caused by either COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g., allergies), the child should be tested for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to school. • Anyone that reports symptoms should be directed to stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g., call Health Link 811, or their primary health care practitioner, or 911 for emergency response), and fill out the AHS Online Self-Assessment tool to determine if they should be tested. • Signs must be posted reminding persons not to enter if they have COVID-19 symptoms, even if symptoms resemble a mild cold.
<p>Cohorting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The risk of transmission of COVID-19 is reduced by limiting exposure to others. • Contact tracing is also more feasible when groups (cohorts) are maintained. It is recommended, where possible, that students be cohorted by class. • A cohort is defined as a group of students and staff who remain together. The size of the cohort will depend on the physical space of the classroom or learning setting. • Cohorting will decrease the number of close contacts a case of COVID-19 would have in a school and assist public health officials in their efforts to trace contacts and contain an outbreak. For the purposes of contact tracing, consider limiting capacity of rooms to a number that allows for

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<p>physical distancing (i.e. less students in a smaller room and more students in a larger room).</p>
<p>Physical Distancing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical distancing (2 metre spacing) is a useful public health measure to help prevent the spread of disease. Increasing the space between persons decreases the risk of transmission. Where 2 metres is not possible between desks, the greatest possible spacing is recommended. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If 2 metres cannot be arranged between desks/tables, students should be arranged so they are not facing each other (e.g. arranged in rows rather than in small groups of 4 or a semi circle). This way, if a student coughs or sneezes, they are not likely to cough or sneeze directly on the face of another student. • In situations where physical distancing is not possible (e.g., busses, classrooms and some sporting activities), extra emphasis on hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, not participating when sick and cleaning and disinfecting on a regular basis before and after activities is strongly recommended. • It is still recommended to maintain physical distancing within a cohort whenever possible to minimize the risk for disease transmission (i.e., spacing between desks).
<p>Non-medical face masks</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-medical face masks can play a role in reducing the transmission of COVID-19 in the community when worn properly and hygiene practices are followed, particularly when consistent physical distancing is not possible. • It is required that all teachers and staff in all school settings and students in grades 4-12 wear non-medical masks while in shared areas of school, outside the classroom, and on school buses where they may not be able to maintain the recommended physical distancing requirements. • Non-medical masks are not required while students are seated in the classroom during instruction if following the physical distancing guidance above. If close contact between students, or students and teachers/staff is occurring as a result of classroom activities, non-medical masks should be used for the duration of this activity. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Two reusable masks per student/staff will be provided by the Government of Alberta. Additional single-use masks will be available at schools if required. ○ Masking for this group is required in addition to other strategies that mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19, such as physical distancing, cohorting where possible, daily screening, hygiene, and enhanced cleaning. ○ There is increasing evidence that older students may be more likely to transmit COVID-19 than younger students, and are at a higher risk of significant disease than younger students. ○ When non-medical face masks are used, hands should be cleaned before and after putting it on and taking it off. Avoid touching the

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

mask once it is on. Masks should be changed after they become wet or soiled.

- After removing a reusable non-medical face mask that will be re-worn prior to washing, it should be placed into a clean, breathable bag or container (allows for evaporation) for storage. Consider using a bag that can be washed. All masks should have two distinct sides, one side that touches the face and one that faces outwards.
- Do not reuse masks that are wet or soiled prior to laundering. A wet or soiled mask that requires laundering should be placed into a sealed bag or container where it is stored until it can be taken home and washed.
- Disposable masks that are damaged or dirty should be discarded into a garbage bin that is lined with a plastic bag.
- 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 comply with other personal preventative practices such as frequent hand hygiene and physical distancing as much as possible.
- Additional guidance on non-medical face masks is available [here](#).
- Exemptions to mask requirement for all teachers and staff in all school settings and students in grades 4-12 include:
 - Persons who are unable to place, use or remove a non-medical face mask without assistance;
 - Persons unable to wear a non-medical face mask due to a mental or physical concern or limitation;
 - Persons consuming food or drink in designated areas;
 - Persons engaged in physical exercise;
 - Persons providing care or assistance to a person with a disability where a non-medical face mask would hinder that caregiving or assistance;
 - Persons engaging in services that require the temporary removal of the non-medical face mask, and
 - Spaces where physical barriers have been installed between persons.
- Non-medical face masks may be considered but are not routinely recommended for younger students in grades K-3. It is recommended that these students instead adhere to the other public health strategies that mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19, such as cohorting, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to reduce the risk of transmission.
 - Masks are not routinely recommended for younger students in grades K-3 due to difficulties with proper fit, compliance, and less virus transmission among younger children.
 - Younger children may not be able to avoid touching their mask, and this could end up increasing the risk of virus transmission more than not wearing a mask at all.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Non-medical face masks are encouraged for younger children in the community for brief, casual interactions where physical distancing is not possible or is unpredictable. While these children are usually supervised by parents/guardians who can ensure proper mask use, young children in school settings may not always be under direct supervision and teachers may not be able to consistently monitor mask use in this group. ○ Parents/guardians who are considering non-medical face masks for their child in grades K-3 should make their choice based on a risk assessment, including the child’s ability to consistently use the non-medical face mask correctly and safely during the day, which may be dependent on various factors such as age, maturity, physical ability and comprehension. ● School administrators should develop a plan to ensure that students who are hearing impaired or may rely on facial cues are able to communicate with others in areas where non-medical face masks are being worn, or have their educational needs met when teachers are wearing non-medical face masks in the classroom. This may include the use of transparent masks. As with other non-medical face masks, it is important that transparent masks cover the nose and mouth, as well as fit securely against the face. ● School staff should monitor for and address any discrimination or bullying associated with a student either wearing or not wearing a non-medical face mask. ● Parents/guardians should be encouraged to help their children become comfortable with wearing a mask. Masks should not be worn by anyone who is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to age, ability or developmental status). ● Schools should consult their designated Occupational Health and Safety department for mask-wearing policies and other personal protective equipment policies for their staff.
<p>Expectations for drop-off/pick-up and entry areas at schools</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schools should develop procedures for drop-off that support physical distancing where possible between all persons (except household members). ● Consider strategies to support physical distancing such as staggering drop-off and pick-up times and locations, or put in place other protocols to limit contact between staff/parents/guardians/children/students as much as possible.
<p>In-person learning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Schools should develop procedures and plans for in-person learning that supports physical distancing where possible, and to separate cohorts to the greatest extent possible. ● Consider how to best address traffic flow throughout the schools. This may include one-way hallways and designated entrance and exit doors. Note that it is important not to reduce the number of exits and ensure the fire code is adhered to. ● If two or more people from different cohorts are required to come within 2 metres of one another for the purposes of instruction, practice or

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<p>undertaking examinations, additional protections must be instituted such as engineering controls (such as plexiglass barriers or partitions), or administrative controls (adapting the activity to minimize or eliminate close contacts).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For activity planning, staff should ask themselves the following questions to determine the risk of the activities and whether they are allowed to proceed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the activity involve shared surfaces or objects frequently touched by hands? ○ Can an activity be modified to increase opportunities for physical distancing? ○ What is the frequency/possibility to clean high touch surfaces (e.g., electronic devices, instruments, equipment, toys)? • To align with physical distancing, field trips and activities requiring group transportation should be postponed at this time. • Stagger lunch/snack breaks to maintain physical distancing among children/students. • Learning experiences involving unprotected (without a mask or physical barrier) in-person singing, cheering or shouting or playing wind instruments should be postponed at this time. Consider alternatives such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Recording or live-streaming individual performers in separate locations; ○ Including more lessons focused on music appreciation or music theory; ○ Choose to play instruments that are lower risk (e.g., percussion or string instruments over wind instruments).
<p>Expectations for visitors and other service providers entering the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The public is allowed into the school following established protocols. • The public should not enter the school if they are ill. • Parents/guardians can attend the school if they are required. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When a visitor enters the school they should be asked to use the Alberta Health Daily Checklist before they enter the school. ○ If a visitor answers YES to any of the questions, the individual must not be admitted into the school. ○ All adult visitors and visitors who are students in grades 4 to 12 must wear a mask. • A record of all visitors should be kept. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The school should screen service providers, including delivery drivers and independent contractors using the Alberta Health Daily Checklist before they enter the school. ○ If a service provider answers YES to any of the questions, the individual must not be admitted into the school. ○ In the case of a delivery driver answering YES, the driver/school will make alternate delivery arrangements.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

<p>Risk mitigation for high traffic areas in school facilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should institute controls to promote physical distancing between all attendees in areas in and outside of the classroom, including hallways, washrooms, and common areas. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Staggering start and end-times for classes to avoid crowded hallways. ○ Posting signs, using stanchions and marking floors. ○ Removing and restaging seating in public areas to prevent gathering. ○ Considering limiting bathroom occupancy at any one time. ○ Use of non-medical face masks for all staff and students in grade 4-12 in high traffic areas.
<p>Expectations for shared use equipment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of shared items or equipment is to be avoided where possible. • Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. • Students and staff are required to perform hand hygiene before and after using shared equipment. • Arrangements for storage of personal items should be made. • Children/students should be provided with an area for storing personal items.
<p>Auxiliary Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gymnasiums can be used to deliver physical education programming. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ When possible physical education should be done outside instead of inside as the risk of transmission is more likely to occur indoors rather than outdoors. Follow the Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation as relaunch progresses. ○ Administrators and teachers should choose activities or sports that support physical distancing (e.g. badminton over wrestling). • Consider using auxiliary space such as gyms and libraries to deliver education program to aid in physical distancing. • Use of shared items or sports equipment should be discouraged. Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use, or users should perform hand hygiene before and after each use. • School assemblies or other large gatherings (e.g., concerts or dances) must be avoided. Virtual options should be offered instead of in person gatherings.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

<p>Food Services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activities that involve the sharing of food between students or staff should not occur. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Classes that teach food preparation may occur as long as students do not share the food they prepare with other students or staff. • For classroom meals and snacks: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ No self-serve or family-style meal service. Instead, switch to pre-packaged meals or meals served by designated staff. ○ Food provided by the family should be stored with the student’s belongings. ○ Close off the food preparation areas that could be accessed by students/children, non-designated staff, or essential visitors. ○ Ensure that food-handling staff practice meticulous hand hygiene and are excluded from work if they are symptomatic. ○ Students/children should practice physical distancing while eating. ○ There should be no common food items (e.g., salt and pepper shakers, ketchup). ○ Utensils should be used to serve food items (not fingers). ○ If a school is using a common lunchroom and when possible staggering lunch times, ensure that all surfaces of the tables and chairs (including the underneath edge of the chair seat) are cleaned and disinfected after each use. <p>Food Service Programs (e.g., Cafeterias)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food service establishments should follow the Alberta Health restaurant guidance posted here. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use alternate processes to reduce the numbers of people dining together at one time. ○ Remove/rearrange dining tables to maintain physical distancing. ○ Place tape or other markings on floors to maintain a physical distancing of 2 metres. ○ Stagger meal service times to reduce the numbers of people present at any one time. ○ Adapt other areas to serve as additional dining space to increase spacing among persons in the same room. ○ Do not use buffets. Instead, switch to pre-packaged meals or meals served by staff. ○ Dispense cutlery, napkins and other items to students/children, rather than allowing them to pickup their own items.
<p>Responding to Illness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff members, parents, and children/students should not enter the school if they have symptoms of COVID-19. • Schools should develop procedures to address staff that become symptomatic during the school day to allow that staff member to isolate/leave the school for the time recommended by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Alberta Health Services. The staff member should be encouraged to access COVID-19 testing by accessing the AHS Online Testing tool.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If a child/student develops symptoms while at the school, the child/student should be asked to wear a non-medical mask if they are able to, and be isolated in a separate room. The parent/guardian should be notified to come and pick up the student immediately. If a separate room is not available, the child/student should be kept at least 2 metres away from other children/students. The student should be encouraged to access COVID-19 testing by accessing the AHS Online Testing tool. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If the child/student requires close contact and care, staff can continue to care for the child/student until the parent is able to pick up the child/student. The student and staff must wear a mask and close interactions with the student that may result in contact with the student’s respiratory secretions should be avoided. If very close contact is required and the child is young the staff member should also use a face shield or eye protection ○ School staff will receive one reusable face shield for their use in the school, to be used at the discretion of the individual staff member. Plastic shields can help reduce exposure by protecting eyes, nose and mouth of the wearer from splashes and sprays of bodily fluids from other people. As face shields are not equivalent to masks, a mask must still be worn while wearing a face shield. ○ Staff/students must wash their hands before donning a mask, before and after removing the mask (as per Alberta Health mask guidance), and before and after touching any items used by the child/student. ○ All items the student touched/used while isolated must be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child/student has been picked up. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. paper, books, cardboard puzzles) should be removed from the classroom and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 10 days. • Each school will receive two contactless thermometers to assist with managing student and staff health. Thermometer use will be at the discretion of the school authority. • Schools must keep records of a student’s known pre-existing conditions. If a student develops symptoms in or outside of the program that could be caused by COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g. allergies), the student should be tested for COVID-19 at least once to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to the school. • If there is an absence rate of 10% due to illness OR there are an unusual amount of individuals with similar symptoms, school administrators must report to the local public health unit or school nurse as per their usual outbreak notification process, regardless of the COVID-19 test results for each individual. The purpose of this is to continue to monitor for other clusters of illness that may not be COVID-19 related and alert Alberta Health Services to potential outbreaks of other diseases.
<p>Student Transportation</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents and children/students should not be in the pick-up area or enter the bus if they have symptoms of COVID-19.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The driver should be provided with a protective zone, which may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2 metre physical distance; ○ Physical barrier; ○ Non-medical face mask; or ○ Other • Students should be assigned seats and a record of this seating plan should be kept in order to assist with contact tracing in the case of a student being a case of COVID-19. Students who live in the same household should be seated together. • Non-medical face masks are required for students in grades 4-12. • Non-medical face masks may be considered for students in grades K-3, however they are not routinely recommended. • Schools should develop procedures for student loading, unloading and transfers that support physical distancing of 2 metres between all persons (except household members), when possible and may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children/students start loading from the back seats to the front of bus. ○ Where feasible, limit the number of students per bench unless from the same household. ○ Students from the same household may share seats. ○ Students start unloading from the front seats to the back of bus. • A child who becomes symptomatic during the bus trip should be provided a mask if they are not already wearing one. The driver will contact the school to make the appropriate arrangements to pick up the child/student (see Responding to Illness above). • Bus cleaning and records: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, window areas, rails, steering wheel, mobile devices and GPS prior to each run. ○ It is recommended that vehicle cleaning logs be kept.
<p>Work Experience and other Learning Experiences</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work experience may resume as long as the risk of infection is mitigated for all participants. • If the work experience placement is in a workplace, the child/student is expected to follow health rules set out by the workplace which should comply with the Workplace Guidance for Business Owners. • The time that individuals are in close contact should be kept to a minimum. • Use of shared items or equipment should be avoided. Equipment that must be shared should be cleaned and disinfected before and after each use, AND users should perform hand hygiene before and after each use. • Learning experiences involving unprotected in-person singing or playing wind instruments may pose an increased risk of transmission and should be postponed at this time. Alternatives such as recording or live-

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

	<p>streaming individual performers in separate locations should be pursued.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sports practices and outdoor activities may proceed in accordance with sector specific guidance.• For more guidance on sport, physical activity and recreation, refer to the Guidance for Sport, Physical Activity and Recreation.
International Students/Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Once Canada lifts travel restrictions and non-essential international travel resumes, international travel programs and international education programs in Alberta can resume if quarantine requirements and public health orders are followed.

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

Appendix A: Indigenous Services Canada – First Nations and Inuit Health Branch ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES Contacts

ISC-First Nations and Inuit Health Branch Environmental Public Health Services	REGULAR BUSINESS HOURS 8:00 am – 4:00 pm	
Edmonton Office	Environmental Public Health	780-495-4409
Tsuut'ina Office	Environmental Public Health	403-299-3939

GUIDANCE FOR SCHOOL RE-ENTRY – SCENARIO 1

Appendix B: AHS Zone Environmental Public Health Contacts

Portal link: <https://ephisahs.albertahealthservices.ca/create-case/>

ZONE	CONTACT EMAIL ADDRESS	PHONE NUMBERS FOR MAIN OFFICE
Calgary Zone	calgaryzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Calgary 403-943-2288
Central Zone	centralzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Red Deer 403-356-6366
Edmonton Zone	edmontonzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Edmonton 780-735-1800
North Zone	northzone.environmentalhealth@ahs.ca	Grande Prairie 780-513-7517
South Zone	she.southzoneeph@ahs.ca	Lethbridge 403-388-6689