

Information for Parents and Schools: Thresholds for Changes to In-Classroom Learning

August 2020

The following case definitions will be used by Saskatchewan public health officials when assessing COVID-19 cases in school settings starting in the fall of 2020. It is a cautious approach as we enter a school year during a pandemic – circumstances that are new to every jurisdiction.

This approach will be assessed throughout the school year based on transmission trends and risk, and health system and education system capacity. Public health surveillance will guide this policy to ensure that Saskatchewan balances the need for school-setting based education while mitigating COVID-19 transmission for students, their families, teachers and staff as real time information becomes available.

Single Positive COVID-19 Result

- If a student or teacher receives a positive COVID-19 test result, public health immediately begins their contact investigation. Notification processes will proceed as outlined in "Information for Parents: COVID-19 Notification and Illness in School."

Outbreak Declaration

- If two individuals within a school test positive for COVID-19, an outbreak is declared for that school.
- The declaration of an outbreak does not automatically result in school closure. Like outbreaks in acute care, long-term care, or business settings, an outbreak declaration may be triggered by a low number of cases but is used by public health to mobilize and coordinate a response to the infection.
- With the declaration of an outbreak, all parents of that school will receive notification and the declaration will be posted to Saskatchewan.ca.

Threshold for Changes to In-Classroom Delivery

- If the contact investigation determines there have been close contacts in the classroom setting, parents of children in that classroom will be notified.
- If there is a second positive case confirmed in that classroom, the class will receive alternate instruction (non-classroom) arrangements for 14 days and public health will guide the school on specific actions to ensure the classroom setting is safe for return.

Threshold for Changes to School-Wide Delivery

- Schools or a section of schools will receive alternate instruction (non-classroom) arrangements when:
 - There are two or more positive COVID-19 cases in more than one classroom, and there are regularly shared common areas and amenities (entrances, washrooms, buses); and
 - Public health cannot establish transmission links between those cases through the contact tracing investigation.

- In some instances, the above may only be applicable to a “wing” of a school where cohorts of classes are sharing common facilities. If this characterizes an entire school, the school will be moved to alternative learning opportunities.
- Local medical health officers will also take specific school settings into consideration when designating a school to this type of approach, including: class/school layout and operations, vulnerable populations in that school or community, transmission risk in the community, etc.
- Public health may also designate a school to this type of approach when there is high risk in the community based on community transmission.
- Public health will guide the school on the specific actions to ensure the classroom setting is safe for return (cleaning, amended classroom layout).