

# COVID-19 FAQ #19 Responding to COVID-19

November 23, 2020

In Update #19 on COVID-19 related issues, you will find information related to: COVID-19 exposure; self-isolation requirements; teacher candidates; virtual school; and 2SLGBTQ+ students.

**Need a refresher on ETFO's most recent COVID-19 update?**

[View a version of FAQ update #18](#)

Stay informed about your health and safety at work at [etfohealthandsafety.ca](https://etfohealthandsafety.ca).

## ETFO Letter to Premier, Minister of Education

An ETFO letter to the Minister of Education and Premier Ford was sent on Monday, November 23, 2020. It calls on the government to listen to the experts, collect the necessary data to determine whether COVID-19 is being spread by schools, reduce class sizes to 15 students and improve ventilation in every classroom in Ontario. It cites the recommendations of University of Toronto Epidemiology Professor Dr. David Fisman.

The [letter](#) has been posted to the ETFO website and shared on social media. A media release echoing the need for more data, smaller class sizes and better ventilation was sent to the media and has generated media interviews with President Hammond.

## Survey Regarding Your Pandemic Experiences

All ETFO members are encouraged to participate in *A Survey of Education Workers' Experiences during the Pandemic Second Wave*, which is designed to explore the links between personal protective equipment (PPE), safe work protocols and member mental health. Your participation will be extremely valuable in helping ETFO better understand and address the issues you have faced during the pandemic.

All information collected is confidential. ETFO has partnered with the Occupational Health Clinics for Ontario Workers (OHCOW), with help from researchers at the Institute of Work & Health and Duke University in North Carolina, on this research. This version of the survey has been developed specifically for ETFO and includes some questions to reflect specific concerns of our members in schools and working from home.



You can participate in the survey [here](#).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **The government seems to be passing off responsibility to public health units for COVID-19 measures. What are the changes?**

An update on changes to the Operational Guidance: COVID-19 management in schools document was released on November 6, 2020. Key changes in this document include the following:

- Local public health units (PHUs) are responsible for determining when an individual or cohorts are dismissed, when schools are closed and when individuals or cohorts can return to school. In some instances, local PHUs may give discretion to principals to dismiss individuals or cohorts for self-isolation while awaiting results of a local public health investigation.
- There is added guidance for school boards on reporting COVID-19 absences in schools using the online reporting tool with a requirement to report daily. Boards must report suspected cases to the local public health unit to support case management and contact tracing.
- Regarding screening practices, screening prior to arrival at the school is necessary, and the use of the provincial screening tool is encouraged.
- Self-isolation periods now align with Ministry of Health updated guidance on testing and clearance and in the [COVID-19 school and child care screening tool](#).
- If a child develops symptoms and their self-screening indicates they should stay home, but their siblings do not have symptoms, the siblings do not need to isolate until the child with symptoms tests positive for COVID-19.
- Boards must be prepared to pivot to remote learning when needed. They are to support the transition to remote learning for siblings of students who have a confirmed case of COVID-19.
- Revised language on testing states that individuals should only consult a health care provider as needed. Previous language indicated individuals should seek testing even if showing mild symptoms.
- Medical notes and proof of a negative test are not required for an individual to return to school.

### **What reporting forms should I complete and submit if I believe I have been exposed to COVID-19 at work?**

If members believe they may have been exposed due to a confirmed case of COVID-19 at their workplace, they should complete a [WSIB Worker's Exposure Incident Form \(Form 3958B\)](#). No symptoms or a diagnosis of COVID-19 are needed to complete and submit this form. If a COVID-19 illness develops from the reported exposure, the WSIB will be able to process the claim faster if the exposure form has already been filed. The school board should also have another method of reporting this exposure on an

accident/incident reporting form for injury/illness or on a near miss/health and safety concern form.

### **I have tested positive for COVID-19 and believe I contracted it at work. What forms should I complete?**

Members need to report the illness to their employer using the school board's accident/incident reporting form for injury/illness. All confirmed cases of workers should be considered workplace-related until determined to be otherwise. Due to concerns with inadequate contact tracing, public health's "determination" of community spread may not be reliable.

As this illness can result in lost time from work and medical attention, including a COVID-19 assessment, members must also report their illness to the WSIB by completing [WSIB Form 6](#). They must also provide the school board with a copy of the form. The board will provide the member with a copy of its Form 7.

When seeking medical attention from a health care professional, inform them that this is a workplace illness to ensure they complete WSIB Form 8. Members will need to provide a copy of page 2 of the form to the school board. Please keep a copy of all reports.

### **What are the new updated timeline requirements for self-isolation scenarios?**

*Tested COVID-19 positive:* 10-day self-isolation from the onset of symptoms if experiencing mild to moderate symptoms and there is no immune compromise.

*Symptoms but not tested:* 10-day self-isolation starting from the onset of symptoms if experiencing mild to moderate symptoms and there is no immune compromise.

*Severe illness:* Those requiring ICU level care or with severe immune compromise must self-isolate for 20 days from symptom onset.

*High risk exposure:* Those notified by public health or the COVID-19 app that they have had a high risk exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19 must self-isolate for 14 days from their last exposure regardless of having a negative test result.

*Travelling outside Canada:* 14-day self-isolation from the day returned regardless of having a negative test result.

*Negative test:* Those who have had a COVID-19 test because of symptoms but who test negative can return to school if they: do not have a fever and symptoms, have been improving for at least 24 hours, have not been directed to self-isolate and have had no contact to a confirmed case of COVID-19.

*Known alternative diagnosis:* Those with symptoms who have not been tested but have a known alternative diagnosis provided by a health care provider can return to school if they do not have a fever and their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours.

### **My principal has asked me to host a teacher candidate in my classroom this year. How will that work during the pandemic?**

Taking on the role of an associate teacher and hosting a teacher candidate in the classroom is continuing this year in Ontario schools. It may happen as an in-person practicum placement or as an online virtual practicum placement. While the policies and detailed guides that help support associate teachers in this work have not changed for this year, there are a number of additional factors that need to be considered due to COVID-19. The Ontario Teachers' Federation (OTF) has created a document on [guidance for associate teachers during COVID-19](#) that considers issues such as safety for in-person practicum placements and professional guidelines for online practicum placements.

### **What are the repercussions if I do not wear the PPE the school board has provided for me to wear?**

It is a duty of workers to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) provided by the employer. With COVID-19 guidelines for schools, this includes the medical mask when within the building, the face shield or other eye protection when two-metre physical distancing cannot be maintained or when in the presence of a person who is unmasked, and depending on the circumstances of duties, possibly gloves and/or a disposable gown. Schools and school boards have also developed various protocols for when masks can be removed (i.e. eating or when outside) as well and for those seeking accommodations/exemptions. Failure to use or wear protective devices or clothing required by the employer could result in disciplinary action from the school board and/or a complaint to the Ontario College of Teachers. It would also be considered non-compliance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA). A Ministry of Labour inspector may decide to issue orders to the employer and/or a ticket/fine for the employer, supervisor and/or worker if they notice the infraction.

### **I teach in virtual school. What is considered synchronous and asynchronous learning and how do I assess asynchronous learning?**

Synchronous learning uses text, video or voice communication to instruct and connect with students in real time. As outlined in PPM 164, synchronous learning time may include students working independently and in small groups while engaged in a virtual classroom with the teacher overseeing their learning and available for questions.

Asynchronous learning is learning that is not delivered in real time. It may involve students watching pre-recorded video lessons, completing assigned tasks or contributing to discussion posts. These can be assessed in various ways such as: students writing and submitting a reflection or response to a video lesson; completing

an Exit ticket using Google Forms; uploading a photo or video of something they have created and then describing what they have shared; or providing a response to a discussion prompt posted online.

**I am a primary teacher in virtual school and I have no prep provider. I have been asked to finish my school day early and leave asynchronous activities for the remainder of the day. Can I be required to do this?**

No. Members should not be preparing lessons for their own prep time. Under the collective agreement, there should be a teacher providing the preparation time and therefore, planning and delivering the content even if it is at the end of the day. Members should contact their local office for advice on how to proceed.

**With COVID-19, how can I make my classrooms more inclusive and safe for 2SLGBTQ+ students?**

Members of the two-spirit, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer or questioning (2SLGBTQ+) communities, who already face additional discrimination, violence or exclusion in their daily lives, may now face worsening conditions.

There has been an increase in experiences of isolation and a decrease in access to important healthcare, social/community services and connections that were previously relied upon. These challenges impact 2SLGBTQ+ members, communities and students in very unique ways and may be intensified for members who are also racialized, living in poverty, or living with a disability.

For 2SLGBTQ+ students, they may have lost supportive spaces such as a school-based Gay-Straight Alliance (GSA), equity clubs or other affirming social support. Trusted relationships with peers and staff may be fractured. This impacts feelings of safety, mental health and wellness for 2SLGBTQ+ youth.

Here are suggestions on how to create inclusive on-line spaces, which would also be relevant in face-to-face spaces:

- When sharing names, use personal pronouns and invite others to do the same. Some on-line platforms like Zoom have this profile feature;
- Use gender neutral language to include all people and make space for everyone to feel comfortable (e.g., friends, people, everyone, learners);
- Consider what is in the background of your computer screen and provide an image or feature that demonstrates a 2SLGBTQ+ positive space;
- During discussions on mental health and wellness, refer youth to on-line community organizations that provide opportunities for young people to share, gather and access support;
- Maintain confidentiality, which can be challenging as virtual discussions happen in different family spaces where others may be privy to conversations; and

- Include 2SLGBTQ+ perspectives (authors, writers, films, stories, picture books, etc.) in programs.

Further resources and organizations:

[ETFO 2SLGBTQ+ Resources](#)

[ETFO 2SLGBTQ+ Resources and Information](#)

[The Trevor Project](#)

[The 519](#)

[Promoting Relationships and Eliminating Violence Network](#)

[Youthline.ca](#)

**For other information, please check ETFO's dedicated webpage at [etfo.ca/link/covid19](https://etfo.ca/link/covid19).**