

Education (K-12): COVID-19 industry-specific information

The following content was posted to WorkSafeBC's website on March 31, 2021. For the most current version, please visit [worksafebc.com](https://www.worksafebc.com).

In preparation for the 2020/2021 school year, the Ministry of Education collaborated with the Ministry of Health and key K-12 education partners and Indigenous rightsholders to develop comprehensive health and safety guidelines for K-12 school operations during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This page provides links to the guidelines developed by the Ministry of Education and the BC Centre for Disease Control, as well as general COVID-19 health and safety information for employers. Employers may also benefit from reviewing our protocols related to office space.

Protocols for K-12 education

All B.C. public and independent K-12 schools are expected to follow the Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings, which are designed to build on the BC Centre for Disease Control's COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings and Addendum (March 30, 2021), and address a broader range of content and requirements for schools and school districts. In case of any discrepancy between these two guidance documents, the Ministry of Education expects all K-12 schools to follow the Provincial COVID-19 Health and Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings.

Employers must also ensure they are abiding by any orders, notices, or guidance issued by the provincial health officer (PHO), and the appropriate health authority, that are relevant to their workplace.

Developing a COVID-19 safety plan

Employers are required to develop a COVID-19 Safety Plan that outlines the policies, guidelines, and procedures they have put in place to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Employers must involve frontline workers, joint health and safety committees, and supervisors in identifying protocols for their workplace.

The COVID-19 Safety Plan follows the six steps outlined on COVID-19 and returning to safe operation. You can also refer to the COVID-19 Safety Plan OHS Guideline for information about developing a safety plan, including the level of detail required and use of supporting documentation.

Employers are not required to submit plans to WorkSafeBC for approval, but in accordance with the order of the provincial health officer, this plan **must be posted** at the worksite and on their website, if they have one. During a WorkSafeBC inspection, we will ask employers about the steps they have taken to protect their workers and to see their plan.

One part of developing your COVID-19 Safety Plan is identifying protocols that everyone at the workplace must follow to keep workers safe. We've provided industry-specific protocols below to consider as you develop the plan for your workplace.

These protocols are not a list of requirements; however, they should be considered and implemented to the extent that they address the risks your workplace. You may need to identify and implement additional protocols if the protocols suggested here do not sufficiently address the risk to your workers.

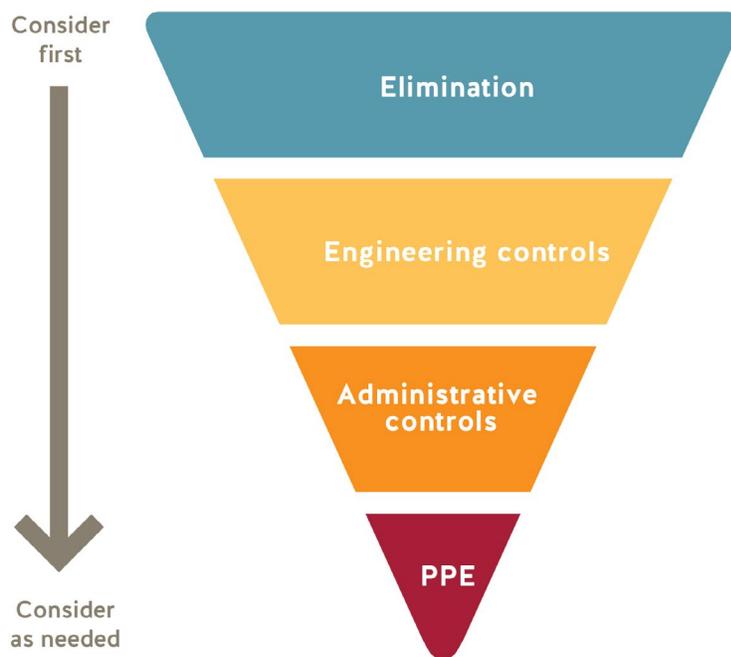
Understanding the risk

The virus that causes COVID-19 spreads in several ways, including through droplets when a person coughs or sneezes, and from touching a contaminated surface before touching the face. Higher risk situations require adequate protocols to address the risk.

- The risk of person-to-person transmission is increased the closer you come to other people, the amount of time you spend near them, and the number of people you come near. Physical distancing measures help mitigate this risk.
- The risk of surface transmission is increased when many people contact same surface, and when those contacts happen in short intervals of time. Effective cleaning and hygiene practices help mitigate this risk.

Selecting protocols for your workplace

Note that different protocols offer different protection. Wherever possible, use the protocols that offer the highest level of protection and add additional protocols as required.



First level protection (elimination): Use policies and procedures to keep people at a safe physical distance from one another. Limit the number of people in your workplace at any one time, and implement protocols to keep workers at least 2 metres from other workers, customers, and members of the public.

Second level protection (engineering controls): If you can't always maintain physical distancing, install barriers such as plexiglass to separate people.

Third level protection (administrative controls): Establish rules and guidelines, such as cleaning protocols, telling workers to not share tools, or implementing one-way doors or walkways.

Fourth level protection (PPE): If the first three levels of protection aren't enough to control the risk, consider the use of masks. Ensure masks are selected and cared for appropriately and that workers are using masks correctly.

For more information

The information on this page is based on current recommendations and may change. For the latest guidance, please see the health information from the British Columbia Centre for Disease Control and the latest news from the government of British Columbia.

If you have a question or concern

Workers and employers with questions or concerns about workplace exposure to COVID-19 can call WorkSafeBC's Prevention Information Line at 604.276.3100 in the Lower Mainland (toll-free within B.C. at 1.888.621.SAFE). You'll be able to speak to a prevention officer to get answers to your questions, and if required, a prevention officer will be assigned to assess the health and safety risk at your workplace.

Translated resources

Our key COVID-19 related resources are also available in Chinese (simplified), Chinese (traditional), French, Punjabi, Spanish and Vietnamese.