

Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for
the School Environment – COVID-19

OHS is everyone's business!



The purpose of this guide is to support the schools for management of OHS in their work environment. It seeks to guarantee that operations can resume or continue under the safest and healthiest possible conditions in the context of COVID-19.

In a crisis period, it is important that workers, employers and other players in the workplace collaborate to have healthy and safe work environments for all! Dialogue and cooperation are essential to achieve this.



Management of occupational health and safety

Management means implementing the necessary measures to honour the employer's legal obligations, namely identify, correct and control the risks and encourage the workers' participation in this preventive approach.

Good cooperation between the employer and the staff is essential to encourage management of OHS.



The employer must **proceed with identification of the risks of transmission of COVID-19 in the work environment**. If the risks of contamination cannot be eliminated, the employer must seek to reduce and control them. The employer must identify the tasks during which workers may be exposed to the virus. The suppliers, subcontractors, partners and customers have been informed of the measures implemented in the company to control the risks associated with COVID-19 and made aware of the importance of complying with these measures.

The preventive measures that may be applied are based on the principles of exclusion of symptomatic persons from the home childcare facility, physical distancing, hand washing, respiratory etiquette and maintenance of hygiene measures for the material, equipment and frequently touched surfaces.

The COVID-19 context can be a major stress factor, whether for the employer or for the workers, suppliers, subcontractors, partners, parents and pupils, due to the upheaval it causes in the different spheres of society. Special attention must therefore be paid to the psychosocial health of the staff.



Exclusion of symptomatic workers from the workplace

Persons exhibiting symptoms are part of the COVID-19 transmission chain in the workplace. Procedures accounting for the following factors can avoid transmission of the disease:

- Identification of workers with COVID-19 symptoms before they enter the workplace, by means such as:
 - a questionnaire,
 - self-evaluation by the workers;
- Posters are installed as reminders of the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing at key locations (entrance, rooms, washrooms, exterior doors, etc.);
- The suppliers, subcontractors, partners and parents have been informed of the measures implemented in the school to control the risks associated with COVID-19 and make them aware of the importance of respecting these measures and limiting their movements within the school facility as much as possible;
- Any person (preschool or elementary school pupil or school staff) exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever or cough or difficulty breathing or sudden loss of smell or taste, other symptoms according to the [government website](#)), up to 24 to 48 hours after the symptoms end is prohibited from entering the school environment;
- Access must also be refused to any preschool or elementary school pupil whose parents or another person in the same residence exhibit these symptoms or have already been placed in isolation due to COVID-19 (case or contact).

When symptoms associated with COVID-19 (fever or cough or difficulty breathing or other symptoms according to the [government website](#)) appear in the school environment:

- A COVID-19 emergency kit prepared in advance must be used and contain at least gloves, procedure masks, protective eyewear, a reclosable bag, an overgarment (smock), and an hydroalcoholic solution;
- A preschool or elementary school child exhibiting symptoms shall be isolated in a room provided for this purpose and wear a procedure mask. A staff member exhibiting symptoms must leave the workplace;
- Only one staff member looks after a preschool or elementary school pupil exhibiting symptoms for the time until the parent comes to get the child;
- A staff member must wear gloves and an overgarment (smock), as well as a procedure mask and protective eyewear;

- The personal objects of a preschool or elementary school pupil who has symptoms should be handed over to the parents in a fabric or plastic bag;
- Once a preschool or elementary school pupil or a staff member exhibiting symptoms has left, disinfect the room and the objects and surfaces touched by the child or the staff member;
- The staff member must remove the gloves, protective eyewear, procedure mask and smock safely in the room and dispose of them on site (if a trash can without contact with the hands is available) or in reclosable containers or bags reserved for this purpose, and then dispose of the single-use equipment. They must wash their hands immediately after this;
- Reusable personal protective equipment (e.g. protective eyewear) is disinfected with a product adapted to the equipment;
- The parents of the preschool or elementary school pupils of the affected child's group, the staff member responsible for isolation and this group's educator or teacher must call 1-877-644-4545 to obtain instructions from the Direction de la santé publique (public health authorities).



Physical distancing

- Whenever possible, a minimum of 2 metres of distancing between people must be maintained at work, from arrival to departure;
- This distance must also be maintained during breaks and lunch hour;
- Handshakes and hugs must be avoided;
- The workstations and work methods have been reviewed to comply with 2 metres of physical distancing whenever possible;
- Traffic and interactions between workers are limited.

Adjustments that must be made to limit the risk of transmission when the principles of physical distancing cannot be respected:

In offices, these adjustments are:

- use of technological means (telework);
- installation of physical barriers (transparent full partitions) between different workstations when they are too close or cannot be spaced.

On preschool and elementary school premises:

- measures must be taken to encourage physical distancing and limit the duration of close contact between preschool or elementary school pupils;
- the maximum ratio of preschool or elementary school pupils per room for the school facilities prescribed by the Ministère de l'Éducation et de l'Enseignement supérieur (MEES) must be respected;

- the maximum ratio of vocational and general adult education students in the classroom simultaneously to perform their practical training activities must be respected as prescribed by the MEES;
- the non-essential common areas must be closed and access to the school facilities must be reserved for staff and preschool or elementary school pupils only;
- the schedules must be adjusted to minimize movements and gatherings at the same time. Access to the recreation yard will be limited to small groups in a controlled manner, and the cafeterias will be closed;
- the preschool and elementary school pupils take their meals on the premises or in the classrooms or outdoors, to avoid movements within the school facility;
- If possible, the same preschool or elementary school pupils must always be kept in the same group, in the same rooms, at the same desk, and the staff should always have the same group of pupils;
- It is not recommended for teachers to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect themselves against COVID-19. Two metres of physical distancing must be respected whenever possible. However, for teachers who would be more comfortable wearing a face covering, we invite them to consult [Wearing a face covering in public settings](#) to learn how to make a face covering and use it appropriately;
- the staff in contact mainly with preschool pupils, handicapped pupils or students or vocational education for practical activities, if the tasks absolutely necessitate being less than 2 metres from another person for a period longer than 15 minutes without a physical barrier, only once a day, must wear respiratory protection and protective eyewear at all times;
- the necessary personal protective equipment, including the procedure mask, protective eyewear and gloves, must be provided and made available to the driver in sufficient quantity.

In the schoolyard:

- play areas may be reserved specifically for different groups, in order to prevent contact between the pupils of these groups;
- changes to the recreation schedules and timed intervals between periods making it possible to minimize necessary contacts between pupils must be provided for;
- special attention must be paid to areas acting as bottlenecks (e.g. locker room entrance, exit to the schoolyard, stairways, etc.) to avoid creation of lineups with persons close to each other.

In school transportation:

- the pupils' parents are informed that if their children exhibit symptoms, they must keep them at home and refrain from having them take school transportation;
- physical barriers (transparent full partitions) have been installed between the driver and the pupils. For more information, consult [Société de l'assurance automobile du Québec](#);
- in the absence of physical barriers (transparent full partitions) on the school bus, access to the first benches is prohibited to respect the 2-metre distance from the driver;
- the driver, in the absence of physical barriers and if the tasks absolutely must be less than 2 metres from one or more pupils for a period longer than 15 minutes, must wear a procedure mask and protective eyewear at all times;
- the necessary personal protective equipment, including the procedure mask, protective eyewear and gloves, must be provided and made available to the driver in sufficient quantity;
- suitable ventilation in the vehicle is ensured by avoiding air recirculation and encouraging opening of windows whenever possible, for example;
- the driver's station is cleaned and disinfected every shift or during a change of driver (e.g. steering wheel, interior and exterior door handles, interior mirror, seat belts, doors, seat);
- the frequently touched surfaces in the vehicles are cleaned and disinfected every day (e.g. seat belts, straps, handrails, buzzers, doors, seats).



Hand washing

Frequent hand washing with lukewarm water and soap or with a 60% hydroalcoholic solution for at least 20 seconds limits the risks of transmission in the work environment, especially:

- before touching the face (eyes, nose, mouth);
- after coughing, sneezing or wiping the nose;
- upon arrival in the morning and before departure each day;
- before and after eating;
- after handling something that is frequently touched;
- when entering and exiting the premises and after each use of collective equipment.

All staff members and preschool or elementary school pupils must have been made aware of hand hygiene.



Respiratory etiquette

Respecting respiratory etiquette consists of:

- covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and using tissues or the crook of your elbow;
- using single-use tissues;
- immediately discarding used tissues in the trash can;
- frequent hand washing;
- not touching your mouth or eyes with your gloved or bare hands.

All staff members and preschool or elementary school pupils must have been made aware of respiratory etiquette.



Maintenance of hygiene measures for material, tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces

Given that the virus responsible for COVID-19 can survive on surfaces, application of hygiene measures is essential.

- Limit sharing of work accessories and equipment (e.g. pens, telephone, tablets, computer mouse);
- Clean and disinfect collective equipment (e.g. telephone, computer, mouse, photocopier, printer) regularly or as soon as more than one person uses it;
- Ensure efficient operation and maintenance of the ventilation systems, according to the regulatory requirements for the type of facility and the tasks performed;
- Clean and disinfect the sanitary facilities daily;
- Clean the meal areas before each meal and disinfect them daily. For example:
 - the refrigerator door handle,
 - chair backs,
 - microwaves;
- Clean and disinfect with a disinfection product usually used, every day or more often, depending on the use of the premises and, when they are visibly soiled, the frequently touched surfaces. For example:
 - tables,
 - chairs,
 - rooms,
 - sanitary facilities,
 - tout autre endroit ou matériel pertinent.

Resources are available online for more information concerning [cleaning of surfaces](#) or [recommended disinfectants](#).



Legal obligations

The legal obligations in occupational health and safety, both for the employer and the workers, must be applied in the context of COVID-19. Here is a summary.

Employer

Every employer has the obligation to protect the health and ensure the safety and physical well-being of their workers. The *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS) requires every employer to take the necessary measures to achieve this ([section 51](#)). To do this, the employer, in particular, must implement methods for the identification, correction and control of risks.

In the context of COVID-19, the employer must ensure that the preventive measures usually implemented are always adapted. Otherwise, he must modify them to protect the workers against the risks of contamination.

The employer must also inform the workers about the risks related to their work, including those related to COVID-19. The employer must also assure the workers of the appropriate training, supervision and coaching so that everyone has the skills and knowledge required to perform the work assigned to them safely.

Worker

Every worker has the obligation to protect their health, safety or physical well-being, and to ensure that they do not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other persons found in the workplace ([section 49](#) of the AOHS). To do this, they must comply with the rules and measures implemented in the context of COVID-19 on the same basis as the other rules applied in the work environment. The workers must also participate in the identification and elimination of risks. If they see risks or have suggestions in this regard, they must inform the health and safety committee (if there is one), their superior or a representative of the employer.



The guide and the kit result from a reflective process intended to support the work environments in management of occupational health and safety in the context of COVID-19. The project is scalable and will harmonize with the preventive measures order by the Direction de la santé publique (public health authorities).

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COVID-19 Hotline: 1-877-644-4545

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