



COMMUNICABLE DISEASE AND PANDEMIC RESPONSE POLICY¹

Preamble

Our world and our existence as humans have been affected by many different types and agents of diseases. Since the Fall, the history of the human race is one of endless struggle against disease. Diseases involving germs (bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa, or parasites) cause infections and illnesses. Some of the resulting infections or illnesses are very serious and can be life threatening. Many germs are communicable—they have the ability to transmit from person to person either by body contact or simply by air (breathing).

This school acknowledges that infectious diseases can result in serious illness and harm to a person, and even result in death. In that context, we support practices that protect the school community. This Policy addresses both students and employees, as they are all affected by communicable diseases and vulnerable to any pandemic outbreak. It is important that appropriate precautions and protocol are communicated and implemented for the protection of the students and employees of **Smithville Christian High School** (the “School”).

This Policy must be read in conjunction with the School’s *Immunization Policy*.

Definitions

Communicable Diseases are those defined by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 558/91*. More commonly, communicable diseases are illnesses caused by infectious pathogens including viruses, bacteria, fungi, protozoa, prions, and parasites.

Reportable Diseases: Reportable diseases are communicable diseases that are defined by the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, Ontario Regulation 559/91* as reportable. Under the *Act*, Principals must report to the Medical Officer of Health, via Public Health Services, suspected cases of reportable diseases involving students. This list is available from the local public health services.

Policy

1. Communicable Diseases

- 1.1. The School is committed to ensuring the provision of plans, programs, and/or services that will address communicable diseases’ protocol so that students and employees (together, the “individual”) can attend their place of learning and work.
- 1.2. The School will administer all health support services in a manner that respects, to the degree possible in the circumstances, the individual’s right to privacy, dignity, and cultural sensitivity.
- 1.3. The School shall abide by government regulations and required protocol pertaining to communicable diseases and immunization and work co-operatively with the local Public Health officials to enforce and adhere to the provincial Health Codes for the prevention, control, and containment of communicable diseases.
- 1.4. Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA), employees can refuse to work if they believe that a condition of the workplace “is likely to endanger their health or safety”. Employers faced with an infectious disease related work refusal must comply with the OHSA work refusal procedures (OHSA Section 43), although teachers have a limited right to refuse unsafe work as they are bound to ensure the safety of their students (see *Ontario Regulation 857*).
- 1.5. Pregnant or immunocompromised employees may require additional considerations. They should consult their physician regarding any additional risks, measures, or testing that may be undertaken, and communicate pertinent information to their principal/supervisor.

¹ Communicable Disease and Pandemic Response based on similar policies developed by Ted Postma for Calvin Christian School (Hamilton, ON) and Heritage Christian School (Jordan Station, ON). Used with permission.

Other sources:

- <https://www.hwdsb.on.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/Communicable-Disease-Procedure.pdf>
- <https://www.hcdsb.org/Community/Documents/Pandemic%20Response%20Plan.pdf>



- 1.6. The School shall post the latest information guidelines (poster, chart) on communicable diseases from the regional public health authority in the health room and the main staff room.
- 1.7. Pursuant to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*, the Principal shall notify the local Medical Officer of Health of a reportable disease when:
 - a student or employee exhibits signs of a reportable disease/infection;
 - a cluster of students or employees exhibit flu-like symptoms or diarrhea;
 - the school's absenteeism exceeds 10% due to illness.
- 1.8. The report shall contain:
 - the name of the school, contact person and telephone number;
 - the student(s)' name, sex, birthdate, and telephone number;
 - the name of the reportable disease.
- 1.9. Diseases required to be reported immediately must be done by telephone to the Medical Officer of Health. Diseases required to be reported by the next working day must be sent by fax. Varicella (chicken pox) is reportable on a monthly basis with the report sent by fax.
- 1.10. A warning sign shall be posted on the door in the main entrance of the school when required to do so for certain diseases, and it shall remain until such time the condition has been cleared.²
- 1.11. The parents of the infected child shall be notified that the Medical Officer of Health will be notified.
- 1.12. The Principal is authorized to exclude students from school for conditions such as conjunctivitis (pink eye), trench mouth, ringworm, scabies, impetigo, pediculosis (lice), etc. Protocol concerning such conditions must be communicated to the parents.
- 1.13. Parents and staff members shall be reminded annually of standard precautions, any information regarding diseases that is pertinent, and the need to report absenteeism due to illness, infections or infestations to the School's office. Such expectations must be communicated to the parents.
- 1.14. All employees must use universal precautions for infection control. Precautions include, but are not limited to, using disposable latex gloves, washing hands thoroughly with soap and water, placing soiled gloves and other soiled material in a garbage bag and discarding in the garbage, and/or cleansing any soiled articles/furniture/fixtures, etc., with diluted bleach.
- 1.15. In the case of disclosure of certain infections (e.g., HIV, Hepatitis B) involving a student or an employee, the Principal shall consult with the Medical Officer of Health and the family prior to alerting the staff and implementing appropriate standard procedures.
 - The School will not discriminate against the infected students or employees.
 - In compliance with the *Personal Health Information Protection Act* (PHIPA) and the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act* (MFIPPA), the identity of the student or employee shall not be disclosed unless permission to do so is obtained in writing by the student's parent/guardian or the employee.
 - The School has a duty to accommodate those with infectious disease; the level of accommodation will depend on the circumstances.
 - Should a student knowingly put others at risk of certain infection and no measures less intrusive to the student than exclusion are available to control this risk, the Principal may exclude the student from school and consider providing alternative home instruction.
 - Should an employee pose a risk of transmission of certain infections to others, consideration shall be given to changing the work situation.

² This mainly applies to Chicken pox (Varicella), Cytomegalovirus, Fifth disease and Rubella (German Measles).



2. Pandemic Response

An influenza pandemic occurs when new influenza virus emerges and spreads, against which the human population has little or no immunity, resulting in several simultaneous epidemics worldwide with enormous numbers of deaths and illnesses. Unlike many other viral respiratory infections (e.g., the common cold), an influenza virus can cause severe illness and life-threatening complications in many people.

- 2.1. In the case of a pandemic warning or pandemic alert, the Principal shall consult the appropriate medical authority and, to the extent possible, the School Board, in order to ascertain subsequent action.
- 2.2. Under the *Ontario Health Promotion and Protection Act*,
 - an employee can be requested to voluntarily quarantine themselves;
 - an employee can be ordered by the Medical Officer of Health to be placed in quarantine;
 - an employee who imposes self-quarantine may be asked by the employer to provide documentation from a physician to confirm the need for such quarantine;
- 2.3. In consideration of 2.2 above, the employee, being a teacher, shall have emergency lesson plans available for occasional or substitute teachers.
- 2.4. In case of re-deployment of staff, the Principal shall implement the following sequence:
 - vice-principals and department heads shall be temporarily reassigned based on school needs;
 - teachers will only be considered for re-deployment in emergency situations and as a last resort (see 1.4 above);
 - support staff will only be considered for re-deployment in emergency situations and as a last resort. The Board recognizes that support staff have the right to refuse re-deployment under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*.
- 2.5. The ultimate decision to close the school because of pandemic alert is made by the Principal (or School Board) subsequent to consultation with the appropriate medical authorities.
- 2.6. The Medical Officer of Health is the primary spokesperson to the media when a pandemic occurs—not the School Board or the Principal.
- 2.7. All school system preparations and responses are coordinated through the Principal (or designates) and may be subject to change at the Principal's discretion and in keeping with government directives and local developments.
- 2.8. Appendix A shall serve as the official **Smithville Christian High School** Pandemic Response Plan; it may be updated anytime by the Principal as needed.

This *Communicable Disease and Pandemic Response Policy* approved by **Smithville Christian High School**
March 6, 2020



APPENDIX A - PANDEMIC RESPONSE PLAN OVERVIEW & TASKSⁱ

Stage of Alert		Description	Tasks	Responsibility	Check
INTER PANDEMIC PERIOD	PHASE 1	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans, but an influenza virus subtype is present in animals	Educate the school community and staff on pandemic awareness and the importance of virus surveillance	School administration	
	PHASE 2	No new influenza virus subtypes have been detected in humans, but a circulating animal influenza virus poses a substantial risk of human disease.	Educate the staff on the importance of increased vigilance Review infection control procedures	School administration	
PANDEMIC ALERT	PHASE 3	Human infection(s) with a new subtype, but no human-to-human spread, or at most rare instances, in close contact only	See Step 1 below		
	PHASE 4	Small cluster(s) with limited human-to-human transmission but spread is highly localized, suggesting the virus is not well adjusted to human hosts	See Step 2 below		
	PHASE 5	Large cluster(s) but human-to-human spread still localized, suggesting the virus is adapting to humans, but may not yet be fully transmissible (substantial pandemic risk)	See Step 3 below		
PANDEMIC PERIOD	PHASE 6	Increased and sustained transmission to the general public	See Step 4 below		
POST PANDEMIC PERIOD	PHASE 7	Return to Inter-Pandemic Period	Educate the school community and staff on pandemic awareness and the importance of virus surveillance Debrief and restock	School administration	



Step 1

Tasks and Assignments	Responsibility	Check
Review school pandemic plan	Administration	
Encourage vigilance in hand washing technique	Staff	
Instruct students on basic influenza protection and good hygiene	Faculty	
Check to make sure staff contact details are current	Administration	
Brief key staff on roles and responsibilities	Administration	
Identify staff assignments warranting re-deployment	Administration	
Ensure all students have emergency contact numbers	Administration	
Create a plan for students with special needs	Special Education Staff	
Update and expand emergency lesson plans	Faculty	
Track reporting requirements (i.e., 10% illness of students and/or staff)	Administration	
Increase supply of tissue and hand soaps	Custodian	
Obtain hand sanitizers for building entrance locations	Custodian	
Ensure supply teachers are willing to replace ill teacher(s)	Administration	
Post hand washing reminders above classroom sinks	Faculty	

Step 2

Tasks and Assignments	Responsibility	Check
Establish a dedicated link on the school's website	IT Staff	
Make parents aware of the plan	Administration	
Begin preparing for procedures that provide continuity of instruction (e.g., web-based)	Faculty	
Advise parents to download applicable software (e.g., OpenOffice) and register on the School website	Administration	
Begin cross training of staff to ensure essential services	Administration	
Encourage parents to find or firm up alternate childcare options	Administration	
Monitor field trip requests to avoid high human traffic areas and senior citizens	Administration	
Decide where to isolate increasing number of sick children if health room is not available	Administration	
Ensure there are hand sanitizers on the walls in key locations	Custodian	
Encourage parents to pack alcohol-based hand sanitizers in backpacks	Administration	
Begin cleaning doorknobs on a regular basis	Staff/Custodian	



Step 3 (Phase 5)

Tasks and Assignments	Responsibility	Check
Restrict access of community, volunteers, visitors to the school	Staff	
Begin posting daily updates on the school's website	IT Staff	
Notify community of possible school closure and transportation cancellation	Administration	
Develop an alternate learning continuity plan that includes student Implement vigorous infection control procedures including washing down keyboards, desktops, etc.	Faculty Staff/Custodian	
Ensure parents specify nature of illness/symptoms when a child is reported ill	Administration	
Begin providing the Medical Officer of Health or the public health authorities with updates—especially if absentee rate exceeds 10%	Administration	
Advise renters of pending school closure which could possibly impact them	Administration	
Reduce number of assemblies, tournaments and other student gatherings	Administration	
Encourage parents to find alternate daycare options	Administration	
Children with special needs may be asked to stay home	Special Education	
Cancel all assemblies, tournaments, and other student gatherings	Administration	

Step 4 (Phase 6)

Tasks and Assignments	Responsibility	Check
Continue communicating as prearranged	Administration	
Cooperate with Medical Officer of Health order of school closure	Administration	
Cancel school bus transportation	Administration	
Implement alternate learning continuity plan	Faculty	
Prepare facility to be commandeered by the Ministry of Health for emergency purposes	Administration/ Custodian	

¹Appendix based on information obtained from Calvin Christian School (Hamilton, ON), with permission, and from the Halton Catholic District School Board (<https://www.hcdsb.org/Community/Documents/Pandemic%20Response%20Plan.pdf>).