

December 11, 2020

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister of Education

Subject: COVID-19 Health and Safety Refresher

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to keeping our school community safe.

With the holiday season approaching, the ministry has developed a number of health and safety materials to support parents, families and educators leading up to and on the first day of class in January 2021. By working together to share and discuss this information, we can help to ensure everyone has a healthy and safe holiday period.

The package includes:

- A template letter to be sent to parents, to encourage everyone to adhere to the health and safety measures within their community over the holiday period.
- An educator guide for schools to use in January that focuses on COVID-19 safety protocols, including hand hygiene, physical distancing, proper masking and mental health and well-being supports. The educator guide will also include developmentally appropriate classroom activities and discussion questions for engaging students in refreshing their learning about health and safety protocols.

These resources are intended to support health and safety practices that are critical to helping our schools stay safe and we encourage you to communicate this information to your school communities.

It is important that school boards have safety plans in place for those students who are experiencing, or could be expected to experience, mental health challenges over the holiday period. Safety plans should include provisions for students to have continued access to services, either remotely or in person, through the school, community child and youth mental health or local health care partners. Students and families can also be directed to resources available from School Mental Health Ontario and Kids Help Phone.

During the holiday break, school boards and local schools will not be required to complete daily reporting through the ministry's absence reporting tool. Absence reporting will resume on January 4, 2021. The final public posting of COVID-19 activity in schools for this calendar year will be on December 21st at [Ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca). Although no reporting is required, we understand that local public health units may still require

contact with schools and school boards during this period to support contact tracing, if necessary. We ask that you work with your local PHUs to have a plan in place to address this unique period.

During the holidays, and in the new year, it is important for everyone to adhere to [the public health measures](#) in your community while at home with family, at work and at school. By [following public health advice](#), we can all have a safe holiday season. Please see the government's [holiday web page](#) for more direct and up-to-date guidance on how we can all plan for a safe holiday season.

I wish you the merriment of the season and hope you are able to use this period to rejuvenate. I look forward to our year ahead and our continued collective efforts to keep ourselves and our communities safe and healthy.

Sincerely,

Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister