



COVID-19 CASES IN SCHOOLS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is the notification process when there is a positive case at a school?

When a positive case is identified that is connected to a school, the Saskatchewan Health Authority (SHA) officially notifies the school division and gives instruction on informing pertinent individuals, such as the class the individual is connected to and the entire school community. The SHA provides standard information that must be shared with school families. School division staff work with the school principal to inform the impacted teacher(s) and the entire school staff. Classroom-specific information is shared with the impacted class, and a notification letter from the principal is distributed to all families in the school community.

When a class is isolated, is remote learning offered?

If an entire class is required to self-isolate, the class will move to online learning. The teacher will have an online learning platform set up for the class (such as Google Classroom or Seesaw) and will provide instruction and assignments during the period of self-isolation.

What does it mean for the rest of our family if one of our children has to self-isolate?

Other children in the home can continue to attend school. The mandatory isolation only applies to the child in the impacted classroom.

When a positive COVID-19 case is confirmed in a classroom, why is the entire class being directed to self-isolate?

The SHA considers every student in the class to be a close contact due to the amount of time spent together in the classroom, even with all safety protocols being followed. When a positive case is determined to have been in the class while communicable, the SHA will direct all students in the class to enter mandatory isolation for a minimum of 14 days from the last day the diagnosed individual attended school. Families will be notified through a letter from the SHA that will provide important information about self-isolation. This letter will be provided to the school to send out to the class.

We have heard of a positive case in the school community days before the school provides notification. Why does notification from the school take so long?

While some individuals have self-reported COVID diagnoses to schools, the school division cannot notify a school community about a positive case until official notification has been received from the SHA. However, the SHA has introduced a new process to respond more quickly to school cases. When a family or staff member notifies a school of a positive diagnosis, the school division will work with SHA to confirm the diagnosis. Once confirmed, the SHA will close the impacted classroom for an undetermined amount of time and all students will be ordered to self-isolate. The notice to self-isolate will be issued by the SHA and sent by the school to families in the impacted classroom. The school will also send a letter to all families with notification of a positive case in the school.

From there, the SHA will conduct the investigation to determine if the diagnosed individual was in the school while communicable. If they were in the school while communicable, the SHA will provide a second letter stating the return date for the class. If they weren't in the school when communicable, the SHA will provide a letter notifying families that it is safe to return to in-class learning.

This new process means the SHA, through schools, will communicate with impacted classes twice. The goal is to expedite the notification of positive cases so students and staff can isolate sooner and stop potential transmission of the virus.

If my collegiate-age child must self-isolate for one of their classes, are they able to access online learning for their second class, which hasn't been ordered to self-isolate?

For collegiate students, if their second class is continuing in-person learning, the student will need to keep up with their classwork. The student should reach out to their teacher for guidance and connect with the online learning platform for the class. If more assistance is needed, the student should contact the school office.

What support other than the Google Classroom can the school provide for students that are required to self-isolate?

Since all students in a class will now be directed to self-isolate, the teacher will continue the daily teachings and assignments through the online learning platform. This may be Google Classroom, or another platform such as Seesaw. For the duration of the isolation, the teacher may provide instruction in both synchronous (the teacher online with the students at the same time) and asynchronous (students access course content on their own at any time with the support of a teacher when necessary) delivery models.

Will the division supply technology if my student does not have access to a device?

At this point in the pandemic, the division does not have additional technology to offer families but will provide paper copies of assignments and resources to those who cannot access the online platform. Isolation tends to be a relatively short period and students who cannot access the online platform will be a focus for the teacher upon their return to the classroom.

Will self-isolating affect the grade in a class?

Direct instruction from the teacher is best, especially if this can be achieved in person at school. If a student has been directed to self-isolate by the SHA, we would encourage them to tell the school. The teacher will provide instruction and resources through the online learning platform or paper copies for the student/class for the duration of the isolation period. This will allow the student to stay up to date with classwork. A short-term isolation should not impact the student grade if they attempt to complete the work provided.

Will the SHA only notify families by letter about self-isolation?

Following the updated procedure, the SHA will provide a detailed letter with the return date to the school, which will be sent out to all families in the class. At this time, there will be no calls to students or families for contact tracing unless the SHA requires additional information.

Why are some schools closed and not others?

While student and staff safety is our priority, closing a school temporarily is not a decision that is taken lightly. Every case is different. The school division works with the SHA to determine if the school needs to be closed temporarily in order to protect the health of students and staff. Other considerations such as maintaining necessary staffing levels may impact this decision.

Our school has had a few cases. Why do we keep getting a form letter?

Whether it is a school's first case or not, the SHA provides specific information that schools must share with families every time a case is identified. In every case, the school is working directly with Public Health officials to provide pertinent information and assist with the contact tracing investigation.

Is the school division providing updated COVID-19 information, such as regarding transmission?

More is being learned about COVID-19 every day. However, all information shared with families regarding the COVID-19 virus is provided to the school division from the SHA. When it is updated from the SHA, this will be reflected in the letters shared through schools.

How will I know if my student is a close contact?

With the SHA's updated procedure, every student in the classroom of a positive case will be treated as a close contact and directed to self-isolate. If the SHA determines anyone else to be a close contact, they will contact that individual directly and provide instruction.

Is there proven transmission between students at the school level?

At this time, we have not received confirmation from the SHA of transmission of the virus occurring within any of our schools. While we do have two schools where outbreaks have been declared due to more than one case, most of our impacted schools have had only one COVID-19 positive case. The safety protocols the school division has put in place—mask policy, physical distancing when possible, proper hand hygiene, cohorting classes—are critical and have been successful in reducing the risk of transmission.

When is an outbreak declared?

According to the SHA, an outbreak may be declared when two or more individuals test positive for COVID-19 at a location. This declaration would be made by the SHA. Families in the school would be notified of the declaration. Having two or more cases in a school does not mean that the cases are connected or resulted from the same place.

Can my child move from their collegiate to online schooling mid-quint?

Families of collegiate students are asked to move between online learning and in-class learning at the start of a new quint. Quint 3 will begin Jan. 4 and the deadline to register is Dec. 10 at noon.

If a family has extenuating circumstances, they can speak to their principal about requesting a transfer. However, establishing deadlines for transfers benefits students and staff alike. Students achieve their best when they have steadiness in their learning environment and classroom relationships. Classes offered face-to-face and online will be at different points in the curriculum and a transfer may disrupt the student's learning and have a negative impact on academic success.

Limiting transfers will also provide stability to class composition and staffing in schools and online learning. Class cohorts for in-school learning need to be protected for safety reasons and the movement of students in and out of the classroom does not support that goal.

I don't feel comfortable sending my child to in-class learning. Can they stay home and access the Google Classroom only?

The online learning platform is intended to support students in the classroom if they must self-isolate or are unable to attend class due to illness. It is not intended to be provided for an extended period.

If our family is awaiting word from the SHA, can my child attend class until notified?

If your child has been directed to self-isolate or referred for testing, they must stay home until they have received their results and direction from the SHA.

Can my child move from their elementary school to online school mid-year?

For elementary families, the deadline to request a transfer was December 1. Having only one transition period benefits students and staff alike. Students achieve their best when they have steadiness in their learning environment and classroom relationships. Classes offered face-to-face and online will be at different points in the curriculum and a transfer may disrupt the student's learning and have a negative impact on academic success.

Limiting transfers also provides stability to class composition and staffing in schools and online learning. Class cohorts for in-school learning need to be protected for safety reasons and the movement of students in and out of the classroom does not support that goal.

If a family has extenuating circumstances after December 1 (e.g. serious health issue, a change in access to technology or wi-fi), the family can speak to their principal about requesting a transfer to online or back to face-to-face learning. Requests will be reviewed by the division.