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OSBCU/CUPE - COVID-19 Omicron Health and Safety Checklist for Education Workers

January 2022

The following resource is intended for education staff returning to school during in-person instruction in January 2022. Please note that the information provided on this sheet does not constitute legal advice. If you have any questions about occupational health and safety law, speak to your Local CUPE Executive or a CUPE member on the Joint Health and Safety Committee.

To reduce a worker's risk of exposure to COVID-19 and the highly contagious Omicron variant school boards must review and implement a comprehensive occupational health and safety reopening program. Further, a worker must receive information and instruction about any changes to existing plans before they are re-introduced into the workplace. As we've seen in this sector, the virus can be easily spread among workers, students, and contractors where inadequate controls (measures and procedures) are not in place.

The Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) sets out an obligation for employers and supervisors to take every precaution reasonable in the circumstance to protect workers. Reasonable precautions are determined through an assessment of the hazards and risks. Once the hazards and risks are identified, controls are implemented to eliminate or adequately control the hazard and the risks. These controls must be reviewed as often as necessary to ensure current practices continue to protect workers.

Under the OHSA, workers must signal to the employer or their supervisor any hazard, or the absence or defect in equipment or protective devices. The following checklist will assist in evaluating the current COVID-19 related measures and procedures in your workplace. Any "no" answer should be communicated to your supervisor or the employer and the Joint Health and Safety Committee. Unless additional precautions are implemented, a worker may be at greater risk of exposure.

Any unsafe condition or situation that the employer or a supervisor does not resolve may form the basis of a grievance, a complaint to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development, or work refusal under the OHSA.

- Making a complaint to the MLTSD
<https://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/feedback/>



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- CUPE Fact Sheets:
 - 4 Steps to Resolving a Health and Safety Problem:
https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/kit_committee_4_steps_2017_en.pdf
 - Tip sheet for dealing with Governmental Health and Safety Inspectors
<https://cupe.ca/tip-sheet-dealing-governmental-health-and-safety-inspectors>

NOTE: The following non exhaustive checklist is intended for workers. See additional resources listed below. Joint Health and Safety Committee members should use the OSBCU Q and A COVID-19 Health and Safety in Schools (September 2021), OSBCU Checklist for School Reopening During the COVID-19 Pandemic (September 2020), and CUPE’s School Board specific COVID-19 resource https://cupe.ca/sites/cupe/files/post_secondary_education_final.pdf to evaluate the board’s reopening plans.

In person learning-period (planned for January 5-17, 2022)	Yes	No	Unsure
Have you received a respirator?			
Did you receive information about how to put on and take off a respirator safely?			
Did you receive information about how to ensure the respirator fits tightly to the face? (i.e., a seal-check)			
Does the school board have a policy that <u>clearly</u> sets out the criteria that principals and resource staff will use to determine which students with significant special education requirements cannot be accommodated through remote learning and require in-person learning supports?			
Are EA’s, teachers, and student support staff consulted before a student is allowed to attend in-person learning?			
Is there an adequate stock of PPE and hand sanitizer available outside the isolation room?			
Is the ventilation in the isolation room supplemented or maximized? E.g., portable HEPA air cleaner, windows that can be opened.			
Information and Instruction			
Has the employer performed an up-to-date risk assessment in light of the highly contagious Omicron Variant?			
Does the risk assessment apply to each activity/task that workers will be doing in each workspace (classroom, hallways, offices, washrooms, etc.)?			
Does the hazard assessment assess each point of contact with the students and other staff?			
Does the hazard assessment consider activities that may generate higher levels of potentially infectious aerosolized particles? E.g., sensory rooms, music rooms, gyms, and exercise rooms			



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	Yes	No	unsure
Have you received information about the common symptoms associated with the COVID-19 Omicron Variant? E.g., how to self-screen and recognize the signs and symptoms of infection			
Is there a process to signal a hazardous situation to a supervisor?			

CUPE Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19 Risk Reassessment Checklist - https://cupe.ca/covid-19-risk-re-assessment-checklist Aerosol Risk Assessment - https://cupe.ca/covid-19-aerosolization-risk-assessment Incorporating Public Health Advice into Workplace Protections - https://cupe.ca/incorporating-public-health-advice-workplace-protections Variants of concern – What are they? And why are they important? https://cupe.ca/variants-concern-what-are-they-and-why-are-they-important 			
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Screening

Is there a screening process in place for staff and students to self-screen daily for symptoms?			
Were you provided information on when to self-isolate and self-monitor?			
Is there a process for principals/supervisors to verify that all staff and students have passed daily screening before accessing buildings?			
Is there a process to ensure visitors are actively screened before accessing the school?			

Ventilation

Are ventilated classrooms prioritized over unventilated rooms?			
Are portable HEPA air cleaners prioritized to occupied rooms?			
Where possible, are HVAC supply air systems equipped with MERV-13 or greater filters?			
Do HVAC systems operate at least 2 hours before school occupancy?			
If you are responsible for a portable HEPA air cleaning unit, have you received information and instruction on the function and placement of the units?			

CUPE Resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prevention Through Ventilation https://cupe.ca/covid-19-prevention-through-ventilation 			
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Physical (Social) Distancing	Yes	No	unsure
Do break rooms have occupancy limits to ensure physical distancing (+2m) is maintained?			
Is the layout of tables, chairs, furniture and equipment in classrooms arranged to maximize physical distancing and prevent overcrowding?			
Are schedules staggered to reduce crowding in hallways and common areas?			
PPE			
Does the January 2022 reopening plan strongly encourage student to use board supplied 3-layer medical masks for source control?			
Does the plan remove all barriers for staff to wear respirators (N95, equivalent or greater)?			
Are there different models and sizes of respirators to ensure a tight-fit to the face?			
Are medical masks for staff stored in a clean and sanitary location?			
Is eye protection available for staff required to work in close contact with unmasked students?			
If PPE is not in its original packaging, can workers easily know/confirm that they are wearing the appropriate level of protection if the PPE is new, reused or expired?			
Have you received information and instruction on how to put on, take off and dispose of PPE safely?			

Cleaning, Disinfecting and Hand Hygiene			
Is there a cleaning and disinfecting program? E.g., daily cleaning, disinfecting of surfaces, frequent disinfecting of high touch points?			
Is there adequate staff available to ensure that surfaces are cleaned daily and high touch point twice daily?			
Does the cleaning and disinfecting program identify or define “high touch points”?			
Are hand sanitizer stations conveniently located?			
Are there disinfectant wipes available to quickly disinfectant shared equipment and surfaces?			
Did you participate in WHMIS training if you are required to disinfect surfaces or shared equipment with a cleaning or disinfecting product?			
CUPE Resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> COVID-19: Cleaning vs Disinfecting https://cupe.ca/covid-19-cleaning-vs-disinfecting CCOHS Resource <ul style="list-style-type: none"> WHMIS 2015 - Education and Training https://www.ccohs.ca/oshanswers/chemicals/whmis_ghs/education_training.html 			



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Case reporting and outbreaks	Yes	No	Unsure
Does the school board continue to provide case information and reports to the local public health unit?			
Is there a process on how the employer will inform staff of possible exposures?			
CUPE Resources: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Employer Response for Workers in the case of workplace exposure or transmission https://cupe.ca/employer-response-workers-case-workplace-exposure-or-transmission• COVID-19 Checklist tool – Post-Exposure Response - https://cupe.ca/covid-19-checklist-tool-post-exposure-response			

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