

September 23, 2020

## **RE: INFECTIOUS DISEASE INFORMATION AND ABSENTEEISM REPORTING**

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Dear School Principals:

As you are aware, the Infectious Disease Control Information Packages are now located on our agency website at: <http://www.algomapublichealth.com/disease-and-illness/infectious-diseases/>. General information about all reportable diseases of public health significance is available at this webpage.

According to the *Health Protection and Promotion Act R.S.O. 1990, c. H. 7, s. 28*:

“The principal of a school, who is of the opinion that a pupil in the school has or may have a communicable disease, shall as soon as possible after forming the opinion, report thereon to the Medical Officer of Health of the health unit in which the school is located.”

**Note:** Principals are not expected to actively seek out cases of reportable disease. Please report only those diseases you have been informed about. Also note that reports of chickenpox may be called in weekly (i.e. numbers and ages of cases); whereas, other diseases should be reported promptly.

School absenteeism is a valuable tool in detecting and controlling influenza. In past years, your co-operation with this program has been valuable to our communities. Once again we are requesting your help.

The program involves the following:

- A designated person from each school tabulates the percentage of students absent each day (due to illness) until the end of the school year.
- If the absenteeism, on any day, exceeds 10% likely due to COVID-19 symptoms or influenza-like illness, the Infectious Disease Control Program of APH is to be notified before the end of the day by calling 705-942-4646 ext. 3274.
- At this time, we are asking you to also complete the ministry requirements for reporting. It is our understanding the local public health units will gain access to this system in the future but until then it is necessary to place a call to the health unit so we can assist in managing a potential concern quickly.



- COVID-19 illness that is suspected is described by the provincial tool for symptoms (<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/covid-19-guidance-tools>)
  - \*\* Please note that this includes symptoms as outlined that **ARE NOT** explained by known reasons for example existing allergies, verified lack of sleep, anxiety. COVID-19 is suspected as NEW or worsening symptoms including:
    - New onset cough, shortness of breath, runny nose, headache, nausea and vomiting, sudden loss of taste or smell, unexplained fatigue etc.
- Influenza-like illness is defined as:
  - Acute onset of respiratory illness with fever and cough

AND

  - One or more of the following: sore throat, joint pain, muscle pain, or fatigue.
- When reporting please specify the number of students absent along with the total number of students who normally attend school in person.

The process for collecting immunization information on students remains unchanged from last year. **Class lists, including notification of student transfers and admissions are still required.**

Please feel free to contact your local APH office, Infectious Diseases Program or Immunization Records with questions or concerns. Thank you for your ongoing assistance in keeping our community free of infectious diseases.

We truly are all in this together and APH will be available for any concerns or questions as they arise.

Sincerely,

Jonathon Bouma MSc.; CPHI(C)  
Infectious Diseases Program Manager

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