

BLOOD-BORNE PATHOGENS (Includes Human Immunodeficiency Virus [HIV] and Hepatitis B and C)

Background

The district recognizes that it has a responsibility to provide as safe an environment as reasonably possible for students and employees, as well as its obligations to treat each student and employee with equity and due regard for privacy.

The definitions and procedures contained within this operational procedure are subject to current medical knowledge and will be updated as required.

For the purpose of this procedure, an employee shall be defined as any adult, salaried or volunteer, working within the school system.

Definitions

HIV

Human Immunodeficiency Virus.

HIV is found in blood, semen, vaginal fluids, and breast milk and causes an infection that damages the immune system. HIV is a manageable chronic infection and if it is not treated, it can cause AIDS.

AIDS

Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome

This is the most severe manifestation of the HIV infection. When an individual is diagnosed with AIDS, they are infected with HIV, and the immune system is so damaged that other diseases called "opportunistic infections" may develop. The diagnosis of AIDS is less common today due to very effective medications that treat HIV.

HBV and HCV

Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Viruses

These are viruses found in blood and other body fluids that affect the liver. Both Hepatitis C and Hepatitis B can be chronic illnesses and may damage the liver over time which may lead to cirrhosis (hardening/scarring) of the liver, liver failure, and/or possibly liver cancer.

MHO

Medical Health Officer. Synonymous with the School Medical Officer as defined in the School Act.

Procedure

1. Students

- 1.1 The confidential nature of the identity of a student infected with blood-borne pathogens (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) shall be maintained at all times. Dissemination of information shall be restricted to those who need to know.

If the medical health officer considers it necessary to inform school officials of a student's infection, the parent/guardian (and student, if appropriate) must be made aware of the intention to inform and should participate during the exchange of information to ensure that

everyone involved in the education and supervision of the student understands the situation and the implication of any action which may be taken.

When the medical health officer decides to inform school officials of a student's infection, the information shall be conveyed first to the superintendent of schools. The superintendent of schools, in consultation with the medical health officer, shall determine those in the school system who need to know and this decision would be based on those directly responsible for the education and supervision of the student.

- 1.2 A child infected with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) shall not be excluded from school unless the medical health officer so advises.
- 1.3 An uninfected student who has a family member with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) shall not be excluded from school for this reason.
- 1.4 Where the physical condition or behaviour of a student infected with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) poses a health or safety risk to themselves, classmates or employees in their school environment, alternative arrangements for instruction shall be provided. Decisions regarding alternative arrangements for instruction shall be made on a case-by-case basis and will be based on the least restrictive alternative. The medical health officer, in consultation with the individual's physician, shall make the decision on what constitutes a health or safety risk.
- 1.5 An appropriate first aid kit, equipped for universal precautions (e.g., rubber gloves and disinfectant for clean-up), shall be maintained in each school and workplace within the school district. Used supplies can be replenished by contacting the education centre.

2. EMPLOYEES

For the purpose of this procedure, an employee shall be defined as any adult, salaried or volunteer, working within the school system.

- 2.1 An employee infected with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) is not obligated to disclose their infection and shall continue to work at their regular job/position/appointment
- 2.2 Should any school personnel infected with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) become known, that information shall be protected as confidential at all times.

In the unusual situation that the medical health officer considers it necessary to inform school officials of a district employee's infection, the district employee must be made aware of the intention to inform the superintendent of schools.

The superintendent of schools, in consultation with the medical health officer, shall determine those in the school system who need to know.

- 2.3 Where the physical health of any employee infected with a blood-borne pathogen is such to endanger the health or welfare of the students the person may be excused from their assignment duties as per Section 92 of the School Act. Any action would also be in accordance with their medical benefits and if applicable, their collective agreement.

Infection with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) will be treated as any other medical condition for the purpose of absence and disability benefits. An employee diagnosed with blood-borne pathogens will be entitled (if eligible) to complete sick leave benefits, long-term disability and medical benefits, and any other provisions in their respective collective agreements/contracts.

- 2.4 An uninfected employee who has a family member with a blood-borne pathogen (such as Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or HIV) shall not be excluded from their employment for this reason.

3. Safety Health Precautions

- 3.1 District employees (child care workers, teachers, secretaries, principals/vice-principals, bus drivers, and noon-hour supervisors) who provide health services to students shall be given training in safety procedures for all body secretions in compliance with WCB requirements. The district shall have in place blood and body fluid post-exposure protocols for all employees and students.
- 3.2 Adequate first aid supplies will be provided, in all district buildings, for the safe handling of all body secretions in compliance with WCB requirements.
- 3.3 Safety precautions, with appropriate supplies, shall be followed as directed by the medical health officer and WCB requirements.

4. Responsibilities

- 4.1 Significant Risk

If the superintendent of schools decides that there may be a significant risk to the individual or others, the superintendent shall refer the matter to the medical health officer in accordance with the School Act

- 4.2 Obligation to Report

The Health Act requires that a person who knows or suspects that another person is suffering from a communicable disease will report this to the medical health officer.

5. Public Information

- 5.1 In the event that concern arises within the community about an infected student or employee, district staff under the direction of the superintendent of schools shall provide information and support to parents and employees utilizing professional health advice available from the medical health officer, without disclosing any confidential information and without confirming whether or not there is an infected person within a school.

Reference: Sections 22, 65, 85, 89, 91, 92, 93 School Act
Health Act
Communicable Diseases Regulation
Workers' Compensation Act
Occupational Health and Safety Regulation