



MESC Handbook- Managing COVID-19

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1. INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the MESC Managing COVID-19 Handbook

MESC continues its commitment to providing a safe and healthy learning environment for students and staff. This protocol for managing a positive case of COVID-19 in MESC is guided by four powerful strategies:

1. Encouraging COVID-19 vaccination and boosters.
2. The distribution and use of rapid antigen tests.
3. Option to wear masks in schools and other MESC sites unless required according to isolation guidelines.
4. Committed to reinforcing a **stay-at-home policy for staff and students who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19.**

The purpose of this handbook is to outline control measures to minimize the risk of transmission of COVID-19 and keep students and staff safe. This Handbook is for the sole use of MESC employees to guide school safety in regard to COVID-19. The Handbook and relevant forms will be made available for all staff.

MESC's mandatory vaccination policy has been suspended until further notice by the MESC Board of Governors. This Handbook will be reviewed by the Executive team and updated as necessary on a regular basis.

Board/Committee Meetings and In-Person Engagement

All in-person meetings and engagements must follow Maskwacis restrictions as set out by the DEMs. Engagement will be permitted upon approval of an event safety plan that aligns with Maskwacis and MESC restrictions.

Disclaimer

The Handbook is subject to change as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves and/or as new regulations or guidelines from [Maskwacis Health Services](#) (MHS), the DEMs and MESC. The measures identified in the Handbook are aimed at minimizing the potential for transmission of COVID-19.

This handbook was prepared as a guideline for the exclusive use of MESC with specific regard to the particular needs, policies, and intended uses of sites within MESC. MESC does not accept any liability or responsibility for any occurrence arising out of the use of the manual by staff or any other person, organization or agency and is not intended for any other purpose but to provide information and guidelines to the employees, students, volunteers and parents/guardians of MESC.

2. DEFINITIONS

Close Contact

In a school setting, [close contacts](#) are individuals that:

- a) Provide direct care for an individual with COVID-19 or similar close physical contact OR who
- b) Had close prolonged contact (i.e., for more than 15 minutes cumulative and within two metres) with a case OR
- c) Had direct contact with infectious body fluids of an individual with COVID-19 (i.e., was coughed, sneezed on, or shared items like drinks, eating utensils etc).
- d) Had physical contact with a person who has COVID-19, such as a handshake, hugging, kissing etc.
- e) Once you receive the COVID-19 immunization, different [quarantine rules](#) may apply if you are exposed to a person with COVID-19.

COVID-19 Case

A person with laboratory confirmation of infection with the virus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19 as confirmed by Maskwacis Health Services or by a rapid antigen test completed by an individual or by a testing service.

COVID Test

Either a rapid antigen test or a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test.

Essential Workers

School Administrators, Administrative Assistants, Teachers, Custodians, Operations and Maintenance, Finance staff, People Services staff and others as identified by their supervisor.

Isolation

Isolation helps prevent the spread of COVID-19 by reducing the number of people you could infect if you're sick. This means staying home and avoiding situations where the virus could spread.

Parent

For clarification, “**parent**” as used in these documents is intended to encompass the people in the child’s life that are the caregivers of the child.

Reset

Cancellation of all classes and all MESC schools are closed to the students and the public. Essential services will continue.

Staff Shortage (school closure)

A staff shortage within a MESC school setting is defined by a school having **more than 40% of the teachers/instructors** away for any reason or if the school does not have enough staff to operate safely. A school with a staff shortage may be closed until the situation is resolved. (Refer to Appendix).

Symptomatic

An individual who has signs or symptoms of COVID-19 illness.

3. SUPERINTENDENT'S OFFICE

Guiding Principles to Learning in a Safe and Healthy School

- The continuation of student learning is essential to realizing MESC's Vision and Mission;
- Promote vaccination of all eligible MESC staff;
- Encourage parents to have their children, who are eligible, be vaccinated;
- MESC will continue to model foundational values and norms to ensure we are flexible, patient and compassionate with staff and students;
- Prepared for possible school closures;
- Collaborate with all partners to build a shared commitment to providing a safe learning environment;
- Attendance will be a key factor for student success.
- MESC will ensure business continuity, regardless of location;
- All employees are expected to cooperate with the employer to create a safe learning and working environment;
- MESC is committed to strict cleaning and sanitation protocols and practices;
- MESC is committed to reinforcing a stay-at-home policy for staff and students who exhibit COVID-19, cold and flu-type symptoms;
- MESC encourages mask-wearing, physical distancing and hand washing protocols and practices where appropriate and/or designated;
- All MESC schools and sites will begin the 2022-23 school year with masks optional unless required according to isolation guidelines.
- MESC will provide masks that meet [recommended standards](#) for students;

Our Partners

MESC will continue to collaborate with MHS and the DEMs to ensure operations align with recommended practices. MESC will continue to support the directions of the Maskwacis Chiefs and Councils and each Nation's DEMs and their Committees.

MESC Policies and Administrative Procedures and Regulations

All existing policies, administrative procedures and regulations will be in effect. In case of a discrepancy with existing procedures and regulations, this handbook or the most recent directive will take precedence.

Parents

To ensure the health and safety of students, families and staff, MESC will:

- Continue to enforce a strict stay-at-home policy for students exhibiting COVID-19, cold and flu-like symptoms;
- Continue to encourage students to physically distance themselves and follow hand washing protocols and practices where appropriate.
- Mask wearing for students will be optional to begin the 2022-23 school year unless required according to isolation guidelines..
- Encourage parents to have their children vaccinated when the opportunity becomes available;
- Work with MHS to host vaccination clinics in MESC schools and will provide assistance for collecting parent/guardian consent. Information on these clinics will be provided on the MESC FaceBook page and through school newsletters.

4. PEOPLE SERVICES- MESC EMPLOYEES

Principles

The health and safety of staff and students are paramount. As such, MESC will continue to adhere to the MESC Health and Safety Manual (found in Public School Works)

Employee Health and Safety Responsibilities

MESC values the commitment to the health and safety of its employees and will ensure that all staff are aware of the measures that have been instituted to reduce exposure to COVID-19 and their responsibilities within this response. It is the employee's responsibility to stay informed and comply with MESC's directions regarding reporting to work and workplace health procedures in the context of COVID-19. Failure to do so may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

- Mandatory testing:
 - If experiencing symptoms of COVID-19, or
 - As directed by MESC.
- Positive test results must be reported to the employee's immediate supervisor and the Director of Health and Wellness.
- All employees must screen for symptoms each day and test if exhibiting any of the symptoms below:
 - Fever

- Cough (new cough or worsening chronic cough)
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (new or worsening)
- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Loss of sense of taste or smell
- All employees must comply with the [Workplace Hygiene Best Practices](#)
- Supervisors will communicate to staff that they must stay home if they exhibit any symptoms of COVID-19;
- Supervisors will have a procedure to address staff that become symptomatic during the work day. This plan will allow staff members to isolate/leave the work site immediately and remain at home for the time recommended in this handbook.

Guidelines for Testing and Managing Rapid Test Results

[Rapid Testing at Home](#)

Test Kits

- MESC will provide a testing kit upon request, depending on the supply.
- Free test kits are available at [many pharmacies](#).

How to Test

- Because it takes time for your body to develop enough protein to be detected by a rapid test after being exposed to COVID-19, repeated screening can help detect infection as soon as possible.
- After exposure watch for symptoms and test every 72 hrs for two weeks.
- Emerging evidence indicates that taking a sample by swabbing both the mouth and nose is more effective at detecting COVID-19.

Below are guidelines for managing rapid test results

Positive Result with or without Symptoms

- Stay home.
- Take a second Rapid Test 24 hrs after the first. If the second test is also positive then you have COVID.
- Stay home for 5 days from the start of symptoms or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer, then wear a mask for another 5 days when around others;
- Follow all MHS guidelines;
- Notify all close contacts from the previous 48 hours that they should [monitor for symptoms](#) and be very cautious when around others.
- Inform the immediate supervisor and the Director of Health and Wellness.

Negative Results with Symptoms

- Stay home;
- Take a second Rapid Test 24 hrs after the first. If the second test is also negative then return to work when symptoms have resolved.

Negative result with No Symptoms

- Isolation is not required but continue to monitor for symptoms and follow all MESC guidelines.

Inconclusive Test Result

- If you receive an inconclusive test result, retest until you receive a positive or negative test result and follow the MHS guidelines.

Retesting after Positive Test Results

- Re-testing within 90 days of a positive test result is not recommended as long as you do not have new symptoms. Some people continue to test positive for up to 90 days after their infection. This does not mean you are still infectious.
- If you have new COVID-19 symptoms within 90 days of completing your required isolation period, contact MHS or your family doctor for advice. People can catch COVID again during that 90-day period.

Absences

If employees are sick, in quarantine or isolation, or taking care of household members due to COVID-19 the employees are to use their regular leave entitlements. (i.e. sick days, personal days, leave without pay, EI etc.) MESC no longer provides COVID leave but provides 15 days of sick leave entitlements.

Employees experiencing COVID-19 symptoms are required to:

- Stay home and [isolate](#);
- Take the [AHS Online self-assessment](#);
- Take a Rapid COVID-19 test if the self-assessment indicates a COVID-19 test is required;
- Report the results to their supervisor.

Employees who experience symptoms while at work must:

- Notify their supervisor as soon as they develop one of the COVID-19 symptoms.
- Immediately put on a mask;
- Isolate and then leave their worksite as soon as their supervisor has made arrangements for the employee to be relieved of duty;
- Take the [AHS Online self-assessment](#);
- Take a Rapid [COVID-19 test](#) if the self-assessment indicates a COVID-19 test is required;
- Report the results to their supervisor.

Travel

All employees will follow the [Government of Canada](#) advisory;

Procedure for Approved Non-MESC Employees entering MESC Sites

Doors to all MESC sites will be locked at all times. All visitors will be required to sanitize their hands upon entry, sign in and complete self-screening. Masking is optional in all MESC sites, unless required according to isolation guidelines.

Procedure for allowing any approved non-MESC employee (Visitor) to enter a MESC building or worksite. All MESC employees must:

- Have arranged an appointment time and date with the visitor(s);
- Inform the visitor(s) of the masking rule for the site;
- Meet the visitor(s) at the building or site at the arranged time and date;
- Have the approved visitor(s) sign in and sign out of the building. The sign-in/sign-out form must be initialed, confirming the self-screening has been completed;
- Conduct the appointment in a safe manner following COVID-19 guidelines.

5. BUSINESS SERVICES

Principles

MESC will ensure business continuity, regardless of location.

Nanâtohk Mîciwin (Universal School Food Strategy)

Nanatohk Miciwin will resume normal operations. Details of the relaunch for each location will be determined between the Principals and the Director of Nanâtohk Mîciwin.

- The food studies curriculum will be delivered in both the classroom and commercial kitchen
- Students and Cooks should maintain physical distancing and safety protocol in all areas

Organization of Workspace (All Facilities)

MESC will:

- Undertake a thorough cleaning of school facilities prior to the beginning of the school year.
- Provide cleaning products so employees can keep their workspaces clean and disinfected.
- Provide masks at each site.
- Place hand sanitizers containing at least 60% alcohol content by:
 - entrances, exits, classroom entrances;

- high-touch equipment such as microwave ovens, photocopiers and vending machines;
- high traffic areas such as water fountains, and washrooms;
- shared equipment;
- auxiliary spaces and common rooms; and
- any other areas that may apply.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize infirmary once it has been used
- Sneeze shields will remain at all locations where members of the public are received;

Facilities and Grounds Use

MESC will limit public usage of the facilities and grounds to Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Montana First Nation and Louis Bull Tribe. Interested organizations from within Maskwacis should complete the Facilities and Grounds application form and submit it to the Associate Superintendent of Business Services.

MESC will;

- Ensure the facility is thoroughly cleaned and staff are available.
- Ensure organizations follow the 75% capacity limitations at each location.

Transportation

Travel/transportation of students must follow the public health measures in place.

Busing Procedures and Regulations

- Bus cleaning and records.
 - All high-touch surfaces including door handles, window areas, rails, steering wheel, the mobile device and GPS used by the driver, will be cleaned and sanitized prior to each run.
 - The insides of the bus will be cleaned and sanitized at the end of the day or when dirty according to bus cleaning protocol.

6. PROCEDURES AND RULES FOR A POSITIVE COVID-19 CASE

- 6.1 Following a reported positive COVID-19 test result from a MESC employee, MESC will:
 - 6.1.1 Work with the supervisor and the employee that tested positive to determine a return to work date. (Refer to “Guidelines for Testing and Managing Test Results”)
 - 6.1.1.1 Staff who had direct contact with a positive case need to monitor their health for any symptoms of COVID-19.
 - If no symptoms have developed, the staff can return to work.
 - If symptoms develop; isolate immediately and take a COVID test. Staff can return to work if two consecutive COVID tests are negative and symptoms have resolved.
 - If the COVID test result is positive, report the positive result to their supervisor and follow the MESC Director of Health and Wellness guidance.
- 6.2 The delegated MESC positive case coordinators will:
 - 6.2.1 Collect information on student and staff COVID status from either the MESC site or MHS.
 - 6.2.2 Update any MESC COVID tracking spreadsheets.
 - 6.2.2.1 Information is shared with any employees or supervisor that needs to know.
- 6.3 When a staff shortage is declared an entire school will be required to close until it is determined safe to reopen. MESC will:
 - 6.3.1 Inform the MESC Board of Governors and the DEMs when a school has been closed.
 - 6.3.2 Notify all Associate Superintendents.
 - 6.3.3 Notify parents of the closure and once the school(s) are ready to re-open for students.

- 6.3.4 Notify staff that they will not be permitted to enter the school until it is determined safe to reopen.

7. STATE OF EMERGENCY/COMMUNITY LOCKDOWN PROCEDURE FOR SCHOOLS

- 7.1 If MHS and the DEMs initiate a community lockdown:
 - 7.1.1 MESC will respond with appropriate safety measures for all schools, up to and including a MESC reset.
 - 7.1.2 The Superintendent or designate of MESC will maintain communications with MHS and the DEMs.
 - 7.1.3 MESC essential workers would be allowed to continue to work from the schools during the lockdown and reset. MESC would limit the number of employees in the school and hours of operation may change to 9:00 am - 3:00 pm during the lockdown when appropriate.
- 7.2 School(s) used for Emergency purposes:
 - 7.2.1 MESC will require 5 days' notice to have a school designated for emergency purposes.
 - 7.2.2 Nipisihkopahk Elementary School and the Maskwacis Outreach School will be designated by MESC for use by the EOC.
 - 7.2.2.1 Staff at these schools would be reassigned to work from other MESC sites or from home.

APPENDIX A

40% of the teachers/instructors by school:

- Ermineskin Elementary/ Kindergarten School: 12 teachers/instructors
- Grace Marie Swampy Primary: 5 teachers/instructors
- Kisipatinahk School: 6 teachers/instructors
- Maskwacis Cree High School: 9 teachers/instructors
- Maskwacis Cree Junior High School: 10 teachers/instructors
- Maskwacis Outreach School/Ehpewapahk Alternate School: 3 teachers/instructors
- Meskanahk Ka Nipa Wit School: 5 teachers/instructors
- Mimiw-Sakahikan School: 2 teachers/instructors
- Nipisihkopahk Elementary School: 5 teachers/instructors