

## VSTA Message to Staff Reps January 14<sup>th</sup>, 2022

*Dear Staff Reps,*

*Please find below COVID-19 related information based on questions that we have received in the office this week.*

*In Solidarity,*

*Treena, Terry, and Alyssa*

### **Prep time coverage:**

Prep time coverage should be provided on a rotational basis by the teachers who have prep blocks during the block for which the coverage is required – if available, administrators can supplement. Administrators do have the right to redirect teachers, enrolling or non-enrolling, from their regular duties and we do see non-enrolling teachers prevailed upon to provide coverage outside of their designated prep blocks. This should only occur when the number of teachers with a prep block is insufficient to supply the required coverage. We reiterated this position at the December TPSAC meeting.

### **Daily Health Checks and Reporting Illness:**

- Staff are encouraged to complete a daily health check. Link: [bc.thrive.health](https://bc.thrive.health)
- Complete any reporting tool provided by public health if they test positive for COVID-19 (regardless of test type), including providing all school-related information requested.
- Enter the absence as personal illness on SFE
- Continue to follow public health guidance and recommendations.

As supported by public health, students and staff do not need to disclose if their absence is specific to COVID-19.

### **JOHS Committees and Reporting Safety Concerns and Suggestions to the VSTA**

During this time, JOHS Committees should be meeting regularly to address emerging issues and concerns at the school level. JOHSCs should also be reviewing and completing the checklist (attachment to this email message) to ensure the Communicable Disease Plan in place is sufficient and appropriately implemented.

### **Reporting to the VSTA:**

In order to help us manage the various Health and Safety issues that may arise as we work through the current stage of the pandemic, we have created [a COVID Health and Safety Report form](#) We will be reviewing submissions regularly and following up with district management regarding particular issues with the intent of highlighting issues that are emerging as a concern across the District. Our process is not intended to replace the school-based JOHS Committee process. If teachers have suggestions regarding how to make improvements to school health and safety conditions, we would be pleased to receive them via this form, a call, or by email however suggestions can also be brought forward through school Health and Safety or Staff Committees.

## **Refusal of Unsafe Work:**

Please contact the office if you believe that a refusal of unsafe work is merited at your school. The following paraphrases recent BCTF advice. A flow chart outlining the steps in the refusal process is attached to this email.

Workers in BC have the right to refuse unsafe work. Section 3.12 of the Occupational Health and Safety Regulation spells out the right of a worker to refuse work if there is reasonable cause to believe it would create an undue hazard to their health and safety. An “undue hazard” would include a condition at the workplace that may expose a worker to an excessive or unwarranted risk of injury or occupational disease.

During COVID-19

For COVID-19, an “undue hazard” would be one where a worker’s job role places them at increased risk of exposure and adequate controls are not in place to protect them from that exposure. WorkSafeBC will likely be using the following documents to make any assessment on appropriateness of workplace safety and Communicable Disease Plans.

## **WCB Claims for Absences due to COVID-19**

If a teacher has COVID-19, the COVID-19 infection coincides with employment in a classroom environment, and they are missing work due to this condition, they are encouraged to apply for WCB using the Teleclaim service (1-888-WORKERS, toll-free). This applies to teachers regardless of employment status (contract, temporary, TTOC, continuing, etc.).

### *COVID-19 verification*

The WCB claimant must have COVID-19 to file a claim. Verification is either from a test result, or a diagnosis from a physician. So if a worker would like to file a claim, they will need a positive test result or attend with a physician and receive a diagnosis of COVID-19 infection (this is based on symptom presentation). The type of test is not relevant (PCR, RAT etc.), but this should be an official lab result document (i.e. you are not relying on a self test).

### *Occupational*

The COVID-19 infection must be occupational. Onset of symptoms should coincide with attendance in a work environment where the worker is in close contact and possibly being exposed to the COVID-19 virus, e.g., the classroom environment. If a teacher is well into a non-teaching period, this would most likely be community acquired rather than occupational.