

BULLETIN 17 • August 5

CUPE K-12



Duty to accommodate

What will happen to members who have compromised immune systems or other health issues that present challenges for returning to work?

Existing sick leave benefits and other terms in the collective agreements apply. This means that members should have access to sick leave if they are unable to work due to a health issue. It also means that they may be required to provide medical documentation to support their request for sick leave. However, we recognize that for many members, existing sick pay may not be enough. We have flagged this with government and will continue to push for improvements to sick leave benefits so that members can be sure that they will not be without pay if they cannot work because of COVID-19.

In some cases, members may be entitled to an accommodation. If a member has a documented medical issue, the employer is required to consider alterations to the workplace including adjusted schedules, additional PPE, working from home, or other modifications to the workplace so that the member can continue to work safely. These cases are all unique and will depend on the circumstances. That said, members will be required to provide medical documentation of their condition and restrictions.

Can I be accommodated because I live with someone who is immunocompromised?

In some cases, the employer may be required to accommodate you based on "family status" as described in the Human Rights Code. These cases are rare, and typically only arise where the employee is legally required to care for someone, such as a child. Family status accommodation typically does not

apply where the vulnerable person is a parent or other adult family member. Whatever the case, you will need to get a recommendation from a doctor about what is safe and appropriate for you and your family member. If the doctor recommends that you not attend the workplace, you may need a leave of absence or to seek an accommodation. If this circumstance applies to you, you should speak to your union representative immediately to get assistance. You should also schedule an appointment with a doctor to discuss your circumstances and get advice.

Learning groups (cohorts)

How will the learning groups work on buses?

All districts have various ways of dealing with students on buses: some will keep them in cohorts; some will put them in family groupings; and some will keep an empty seat between them. Districts will have to follow all protocols and guidelines of the PHO. We understand that this will be outlined in each district's health and safety plan as part of the restart plan. CUPE staff will be gathering information on health and safety plans and issues arising from each local so that we can track progress and concerns as they come up. This will help us coordinate efforts across B.C.

What about members who work on multiple sites or throughout the school like Indigenous support workers, IT, custodians, education support workers, first aid attendants and noon-hour supervisors?

We understand that staff who transition between learning groups or work with students from different learning

groups will not be included as part of any single learning group. This means that they will take appropriate precautions, including physical distancing and appropriate PPE, when working.

Health and safety

What if a member, student or teacher contracts COVID-19?

The PHO, in collaboration with health authorities, will oversee all outbreaks as they have been doing. Their response will vary depending on how the person contracted COVID-19. The public health team will do contact tracing and the PHO will give direction on what response is needed. This could range from isolation to quarantine depending on the situation. If the rate of community infection rises, the PHO will revise recommendations as needed.

Please bring your safety concerns to your site health and safety committee.

Other

We hear conflicting information about how children transmit, and if masks should be worn. How do we know what we should do?

We have consistently been told that B.C. is in a good place with public health able to manage transmission. We have also been told by PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry that children transmit the virus at a low level. We have been following the direction of the PHO who stressed that education is essential, and children need to be in school or may face lifelong implications. The Stage 2 protocols have been designed to allow children to return to school safely – safety being paramount.

Find more FAQs at
bcschools.cupe.ca

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