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C O N S U P
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POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION POST PANDEMIC GUIDANCE

FALL 2021

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OVERVIEW AND OBJECTIVE

This post pandemic guidance is meant to serve as a reference guide for the Post-Secondary Education sector in Nova Scotia to promote consistency regarding fall 2021 operations and activities from a post COVID-19 pandemic perspective.

This document replaces the previous Higher Education Fall 2021 framework which is now deemed obsolete due to the early success of the Canadian and Nova Scotian vaccination program.

The objective is to indicate the best practices the sector has implemented throughout the pandemic and demonstrate their value as we head into this post pandemic phase and use these lessons to control all airborne communicable illnesses including influenza, colds, and SARS Cov2, etc.

This guide is a basis for the post-secondary education institutions to develop specific policies and procedures on public and occupational health hazards and controls.

MASKS

The use of masks has had a profound impact on protecting against the spread of Covid-19, but it also has shown itself very powerful in preventing the spread of colds, influenzas, etc.

It is expected as we enter the post pandemic phase of Covid-19 that formal Public Health requirements will drop for mask wearing however a general recommendation for their use will persist.

Masks have shown their value of being an effective, economical, and easily implementable method to control respiratory disease from spreading on campuses.

The use of masks for larger indoor gatherings is seen as an effective layer of protection against the spread of all communicable diseases. There is value seen in continued promoting wearing masks through education, communication and signage.

Some people may also wish to continue to wear masks as a personal preference.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING / PEOPLE AND CROWD CONTROL

A physical separation between people has shown a benefit in the protection of the spread of communicable diseases.

Office and classroom setups that offer even minimal extra separation between people could provide another layer of protection against all communicable diseases.

Long term considerations around capacity limits, controlling movement (entrances/exits, class start/end times and general gathering limits are seen as valuable with the goal of mitigating situations where disease transmission is more probable.

GENERAL AREA VENTILATION

Adequate ventilation/ filtration is an engineering control to reduce the airborne concentrations of infectious agents reducing the potential for spread of all communicable diseases/ illnesses.

Ventilation can be a combination of mechanical systems (HVAC) as well as natural systems (windows).

There is value in assessing that ventilation is adequate for the size of the space, the numbers of people present, and the nature of the work being performed.

The following are offered as general examples of associations that provide additional information and best practices:

- APPA, (Association of Physical Plant Administrators)
- ASHRAE, American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers
- ACGIH, American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists.

HAND HYGIENE

Good hand hygiene has been an important aspect of infection control throughout the pandemic.

The availability of hand washing facilities and hand disinfectant and their continued encouragement of use is considered a powerful tool in the ongoing protection for all communicable diseases/ illnesses.

There is value seen in continuing communication, signage, education to encourage people to continue to wash or sanitize hands often using soap and water (best approach) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

CLEANLINESS / SANITATION

General cleaning and sanitation practices were critical during the pandemic and are an important consideration for the protection of the spread of all communicable disease / illnesses.

The routine cleaning of common touch points as well as general cleaning helps to reduce the buildup of bacteria / viruses and prevents their easy spread from person to person.

ACCESS TO SICK LEAVE

In general, during the pandemic those that were sick were discouraged from attending work.

This practice is an important layer of protection for the spread of all communicable diseases / illnesses.

Some best practices observed throughout the pandemic included easier access to sick leave as well as working from home options.

When those that are sick remain away from the workplace then the likelihood of spread is eliminated.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY PROGRAM

COVID-19 has demonstrated the importance of Occupational Health and Safety within our Post-Secondary Education communities.

There is value seen in embedding these infection control activities within the workplace Occupational health and Safety (OHS) program.

This could include the development of institution-specific policies and procedures, communication strategies, training, discussions within Joint Occupational Health and Safety committees, etc., all with the long-term goal to remaining diligent with respect to the better control of communicable disease within the Post-Secondary Education sector.