

Memorandum To: Directors of Education
School Authorities

From: Jeff Butler
A/Assistant Deputy Minister
Student Support and Field Services Branch

In order to allow for students and families to retrieve any personal belongs that may have been left in schools since the start of the school closure period, and to return any school or school board property they no longer require, the school closure order issued by the Minister of Education on May 15, 2020, permits temporary access to school premises for this purpose.

The ministry has developed the below guidelines that school boards can use to develop their plans with their local Public Health Units for school access by students and families.

The ministry is aware that some school boards already have plans in place for this that have been reviewed by their local Public Health Units. These boards should proceed with implementing those approved plans. For those that have not yet developed plans, these guidelines can be adopted to support planning, or adapted as necessary in consultation with the local Public Health Unit.

In addition, for your information the Public Services Health and Safety Association is developing guidance on health and safety practices during COVID-19 for school employers that can support broader planning on school access. The ministry will update you when this guidance is available.

Personal Property Retrieval Guidelines for Schools

This document provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis, treatment, or legal advice.

In the event of any conflict between this document and any orders or directives issued by the Minister of Health or the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), the order or directive prevails.

Ontario schools have been closed to students and families since March 15, 2020. In order to allow for students and families to retrieve any personal belongs that may have been left in schools, and to return any school or school board property they no longer require, the school closure order issued by the Minister of Education on May 15, 2020, permits temporary access to school premises for this purpose.

Schools allowing access by students or families to retrieve personal property or return school property must implement protocols to provide for the health and safety of students, families and staff during this process. Schools must follow any further direction given by local medical officers of health regarding this process.

Protocols should consider the following measures:

Self-Assessment and Screening

- Any person accessing a school should be directed to perform a COVID-19 self-assessment before arriving at the school. The Ministry of Health's self-assessment can be accessed here: <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
- Entry should be denied to any person who has any of the symptoms outlined in the '[COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#)' on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 website.
- Entry should also be denied to any person who has been in contact with anyone suspected or confirmed of having COVID-19 in the past 14 days.

Scheduling

- Persons should be scheduled for access in designated timeslots to minimize the number of people in the building or waiting to access the school. 15-minute time-slots are recommended.
- Anyone waiting for their designated time slot should be directed to a waiting or line-up area with appropriate physical distancing markers (e.g., floor markings, pylons, etc.) spaced two metres/six feet apart.
- Schools may consider providing persons who miss their designated timeslot with an additional opportunity to access the school at a subsequent scheduled time.
- Where possible, allow only one person to retrieve student belongings except in extenuating circumstances.

Entrance and Exit

- Schools should designate and clearly mark specific entrances and exits for each visitor as appropriate, and only permit entrance/exit through these doors.
- Persons should be required to sign in upon entry and sign out upon exit from the school.
- Anyone entering the building should clean their hands prior to entry and upon exit. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be provided.
- Where possible, doors and windows should be kept open to minimize touching of door handles and increase ventilation, while maintaining the appropriate security.

Physical Distancing

- Traffic flow and physical distancing markers should be visible throughout the school.
- Persons should be directed to stay only within the area(s) of the school they need to access and refrain from lingering.
- School staff should be on hand to direct people while maintaining physical distance of at least two metres.
- Where possible, use of stairs should be encouraged. Where required, elevator usage should be limited to one person or members of the same household.
- Use of washrooms and drinking fountains should not be permitted.
- Persons should not be permitted to gather in groups on the school premises.
- Wearing of face coverings (e.g., cloth masks) where physical distancing cannot be maintained or is difficult is recommended.

Return of Items

- A designated area for return of items should be provided.
- Returned items should be cleaned and disinfected if they need to be used or moved within three days. Otherwise, returned items should be left in the designated area for minimum of three days before they are used or moved.

Cleaning/Sanitization

- Custodial staff should be on-site to regularly clean/disinfect high-touch surfaces throughout the access period.

Resources

- [Physical distancing](#)
- [Hand hygiene](#)
- [Cleaning and disinfection for public settings](#)
- [Ministry of Health Guidance Document for Essential Workplaces](#)