



February 18, 2021

Dear Parents / Guardians:

I am writing to advise you of some recent government announcements that have introduced important changes to screening procedures, isolation requirements for household members, and access to asymptomatic targeted testing.

In its memo to school boards on February 17, 2021, the Ministry of Education confirmed its commitment to keeping schools open and ensuring the well being, health and safety of all staff and students. This memo outlined updated guidance for public health and safety measures, in light of the virus variants that are emerging. In light of this most recent information, **effective immediately**:

Provincial School and Child Care Screener

All students and staff are required to screen for symptoms of illness every day before coming to school. All secondary students and employees must also confirm that they have completed the school screen. Staff and students with **any new or worsening symptom** of COVID-19, as outlined in the online school screening tool, even those with only one symptom, must stay home until:

- They receive a negative COVID-19 test result, or
- They receive an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional, or
- It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.

The provincial screening tool can be found at <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>. Please note that the screening tool is being updated today to reflect this new guidance.

Isolation Requirement for Household Contacts of Symptomatic Individuals

The Ministry of Health has updated its guidance and now requires all household contacts of symptomatic individuals to quarantine. The means that staff and students are required to stay home from school if anyone in their household has a new or worsening symptom of COVID-19. All asymptomatic household contacts of

symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine until the household member with the symptom(s):

- Receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or
- Receives an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional.

If the individual with the symptom(s) **tests positive**, or **is not tested** and does not receive an alternative diagnosis from a health care provider, the symptomatic individual must isolate (including from household members) for 10 days from symptom onset. In addition, all household contacts must isolate for 14 days from their last contact with the symptomatic individual.

Asymptomatic Targeted Testing

On Tuesday, February 16, 2021, the Ministry of Education announced that asymptomatic targeted testing will begin in all school boards next week. We wish to assure you that the Huron-Superior Catholic District School Board is working closely with our three public health units, the Ministry of Education, and the vendor(s) assigned to our region on a strategy for ensuring this targeted testing occurs safely.

Please note that such testing:

- Is for only for students and employees without symptoms of COVID-19; those who exhibit symptoms of COVID-19 must continue to access testing as usual through their local assessment centre.
- Is voluntary and requires parental consent where students are under the age of 18.
- Will be undertaken by trained medical personnel (e.g., public health nurses, employees of vendors), not by school board employees.
- Might include rapid antigen and/or PCR testing.
- Might occur during the school day, on weekends, and/or in the evenings.
- Will be scheduled to occur first in schools and communities where there are higher rates of transmission; the board will collaborate closely with public health units, the ministry, and vendor(s) to make decisions about which schools / communities have access to such testing and when testing will occur.

As we receive additional information about asymptomatic targeted testing, we will provide it to those it impacts.

In closing, we continue to urge everyone to remain vigilant and observe all public health measures, particularly those related to self-screening, non-essential travel, and social gatherings. We recognize that the recent re-opening of some businesses has acted as a much-needed ray of hope. However, we encourage everyone to continue to exercise great caution and pray for everyone's safety and well being.

Nurturing hope,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Rose Burton Spohn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Rose" being the most prominent.

Rose Burton Spohn
Director of Education

