Public Health's Guidance Applicable to Schools in Nunavik, back-to-school 2021

11-08-2021

To the Attention of KI

Following the Ministry of Education's announcements for back-to-school public health guidance, and the more recent MSSS announcements on the application of the vaccination passport to some extracurricular activities in schools in Québec, Nunavik's Public Health Department has carefully studied our regional situation, and emits the following guidance for application in Nunavik's schools.

Preamble to PH Guidance in Schools

This Public Health Guidance is issued to the best of our understanding of the epidemiological pressure to come this fall, taking into consideration that our region still has a low COVID19 vaccination uptake, and that for youth the school-based offer of COVID19 vaccination has only just begun. This guidance is subject to change.

Organisation of Students into Groups

Bubbles were adopted in the 2020 back-to-school strategy to minimise risk of propagation of the coronavirus to multiple close groups should any given student become infected. A maximum of 3 bubbles was permitted, 1 bubble being attributed to homeroom, 1 to a school option (gym, sewing, etc.), and 1 usually used for an extracurricular activity.

PH recommends that the bubble system be maintained because of the 4th wave of COVID that has started in Quebec as of 18-07-2021, as well as due to the sharp increase in the more transmissible and severe delta variant. However, **the number of bubbles can be increased to 4 in Nunavik for the 2021 back-to-school**.

Attendance Registry of all Students and Staff

For the purpose of being able to quickly do case-contact tracing within a school should a COVID case or outbreak declare itself, we ask that KI maintain an attendance registry (DASH) **regularly for all classes**, and **for some extracurricular activities** that take place on the school premises.

Masking

Preschool

Wearing a procedural mask is mandatory while using school transportation with multiple grade levels only, that is, aboard buses or sedans transporting students in different grades.

Elementary school

Wearing a mask is mandatory at all times inside the school: in classrooms, at the daycare, in common areas and while students are circulating, as well as while using school transportation.

Wearing a procedural mask is also required during Physical Education and Health classes, if maintaining 2 metres of physical distancing is not possible and the class is held indoors.

Secondary school

Wearing a mask is mandatory at all times inside the school: in classrooms, in common areas and while students are circulating, as well as while using school transportation.

Wearing a procedural mask is also required during Physical Education and Health classes, if maintaining 2 metres of physical distancing is not possible and the class is held indoors.

Adult general education and vocational training

Wearing a procedural mask is mandatory at all times, even in class.

Lunch and Breakfast programs

Wearing a mask is mandatory when walking in the room used for these programs, but may of course be removed to eat once seated. Please plan for proper 2-meter distancing of students who unmask for these meals on the school premises.

School Personnel:

Teachers and all other school personnel must follow CNESST guidance on masks in the workplace. Masks are mandatory in hallways, common areas and when moving around the school.

Visiting Professionals from Outside Organizations

Doctors, nurses, Social Workers, Youth Protection and other professional services have been given authorization to resume work in schools by Quebec. The Professionals from outside agencies have strict rules established by their governing bodies for PPE when working in a school.

Vaccination Passport & Date of Applicability to Extracurricular Activities

The vaccination passport is a province-wide initiative that applies to all of Quebec, including Nunavik. Public Health is however seeking accommodations in its applications in Nunavik, as detailed below.

The Province of Québec has emitted clear guidelines as to the application of the vaccination passport to students aged 13 and above who wish to engage in specific **extracurricular activities**. Prior to application of this measure in the school setting, we wish to offer the youth of Nunavik sufficient time to access the currently ongoing COVID19 vaccination offer. The vaccination passport officially entered into effect on September 1st in the whole province.

Accordingly, tournaments or gatherings of youth coming from different communities will require the use of the vaccination passport.

Here is the list of activities established by the Government of Quebec where the Passport should be applied: https://www.quebec.ca/en/health/health-issues/a-z/2019-coronavirus/progress-of-the-covid-19-vaccination/covid-19-vaccination-passport/places-and-activities-requiring-covid-19-vaccination-passport.

For any student or staff encountering difficulties in obtaining their Vaccination Passport, please encourage them to call the Nunavik COVID Health line 1-888-662-7482 for support. A printed paper version of the Vaccination Passport will be obtainable in all 14 local CLSCs.

Parent-teacher report card interviews and curriculum nights

The above-mentioned activities are considered as essential, and are not subject to the application of the vaccination passport for any visiting parent or legal guardian, they are however subject to the gathering limits according to the alert levels in communities.

Case-Contact and Outbreak Management

The guidelines in Nunavik for the management of contacts of COVID cases differ from those applied in the rest of the province (namely, fully protected contacts with moderate to elevated risk of exposure to the COVID case are required to preventively isolate, to break any chain of ongoing transmission).

Additional methods are being deployed throughout the province to reduce risk of transmission including the use of rapid tests in schools, some of those additional measures may be deployed in Nunavik as well.

Assemblies, Gatherings

The allowed numbers of participants for indoor or outdoor festive events, award ceremonies, or school celebrations are currently different in Nunavik than in the rest of Quebec.

The number of people that can gather differs based on the alert level:

- In communities at the green or yellow alert level, a maximum of 50 people can be gathered at an inside public gathering;
- In communities at the orange alert level, a maximum of 25 people can be gathered at an inside public gathering;
- In communities at the red alter level non-essential gatherings are to be avoided.

For assemblies, we would ask that KI apply the rules pertaining to the Vaccination Passport according to the student's age.

We thank you in advance for your understanding and look forward to our ongoing collaboration to keep Nunavik's schools an open and safe learning environment.