

CIRCULAR

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To: CFS Authorities, CYSD Branch Staff, CCPs

Subject: Return to Schools

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 Procedure Information Only

Effective Date: Immediately

On September 2, 2020, the Department of Education issued additional information materials for students, parents/caregivers and educators as families prepare for an informed return to schools. Materials focus on the fundamentals of learning and learning to adjust and manage the risks around COVID-19. Guides can be found online at: <https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html>.

All of the guides contain information that will be useful for your agencies and care providers. We encourage you to review the guides and familiarize yourself with the information.

Several resources and documents are helpful and can be directly distributed to your caregivers, including:

- **Letter to caregivers from Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, Dr. Brent Roussin;**
- **List of resources;**
- **Restoring Safe Schools – What to expect when welcomed back to school;**
- **Welcoming our Students Back: A Guide for Parents, Caregivers and Students;**
and
- **COVID-19 Screening Questions.**

The policy and public health direction in the provincial strategy, [Restoring Safe Schools](#), and guides has been approved by the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer of Manitoba. Public health has determined additional strategies to resume in-class learning while continuing to follow public health guidance. As you are aware, school is a key component of child development - contributing to positive mental health, social development and improving educational outcomes. Schools are implementing the following plans which apply to children in care.

- Kindergarten to Grade 8 students will return for five days of full, in-class instruction per week
- Students in Grades 9 to 12 will return for up to five days per week of in-class instruction if high schools can effectively implement physical distancing and the use of cohorts. Students should expect some remote learning, along with in-class instruction.
- Students with special needs in all grades will return for five days of full, in-class instruction per week.

School division-led remote learning is being established only for students who are medically advised not to return to in-class learning due to COVID related risk factors.

Recognizing there may be specialized needs for some children in care during the return to learning, the following information and direction specific to supporting children in care and families who are receiving services is worth highlighting.

Planning:

- Children and families receiving CFS services may need collaborative support and discussions with schools to ensure attendance, and to proactively address issues of behaviours or special needs.
- Children in Care should (on a case by case basis) be planned for with the school, their CFS guardian and care providers to address any issues or concerns.

Remote Learning for children in care:

- For students who are medically advised to not return to in-class learning due to COVID-19 related factors, the Department of Education is not asking that medical notes be provided. However, school divisions might require a medical note and will provide details about any exemptions required. These situations should be rare and limited to students with compromised immune systems.
- For children in a group care placement, the Child and Youth Services Division is advising that homeschooling cannot be supported when in-school learning is available.
- Agencies and care providers are encouraged to be part of planning around remote learning that is guided by the school division plans and grade level direction.
- CFS Agencies and care providers will continue to work with Education in providing supports for children in care who might be struggling with restricted in-class learning.

If parents/guardians choose to keep their compulsory school age children at home when school returns, they must register with Manitoba's Homeschooling Office. Information about homeschooling can be found at

<https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/schools/ind/homeschool/index.html>. It is important to note that when parents/caregivers choose to homeschool their child, they are responsible for obtaining resources and materials for and delivery of the program of study selected. Provincial funding is not available to families who homeschool. Manitoba high school credits are not awarded for homeschool programs of study.

Children with Special Needs:

- A guide has been prepared addressing education supports for students at risk or with special needs. The guide can be reviewed here: https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/welcome_back_special.pdf
- The guide notes that students with special needs in all grades will return for five days of full, in-class instruction per week. According to Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services (2006), students with special needs are those who require specialized services or programming when deemed necessary by the in-school team because of exceptional learning, social/emotional, behavioural, sensory, physical, cognitive/intellectual, communication, academic, or health-care needs that affect their ability to meet learning outcomes.
- CFS agencies should inform guardians and caregivers of children with special needs receiving services from their agency that they are prioritized for in-class learning.
- Of note, when supporting children with special needs who are medically advised not to attend in-person learning the guide indicates that: Students who are **medically advised to not participate** in in-person learning for a period of time due to COVID-

19-related risk factors will be supported through remote learning. Necessary planning would occur through the student-specific planning process. Not all supports are transferable to a remote, online learning environment. The remote learning approach will require parent involvement and support.

School divisions are implementing plans to resume in-class learning in a way that meets the requirements established by public health. We know that the issue of masks has been raised consistently, so we are highlighting the following information and direction.

Use of Masks:

- New guidance has been provided on mask use in schools.
https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/mask_guidance.pdf An exemption for mask use is provided for anyone who:
 - cannot wear a mask as described in the guide;
 - is unable to remove the mask without assistance (e.g., due to age, ability, or developmental status);
 - is actively having breathing difficulties; or
 - is under two years of age
- If a parent/guardian/caregiver is concerned about their child's ability to safely wear a mask, they should speak with their child's doctor. If the child is either unable to properly wear a mask or has a medical condition that does not allow them to wear a mask, the parent/ guardian/caregiver must provide written notification to the child's school outlining the child's limitations with wearing a mask. A note from a health-care provider is not required.
- Some people would like to use a face shield instead of a mask, but a face shield is **not** a replacement for a non-medical mask.

We thank you for your work during this critical and unprecedented time towards supporting children in care to attend and engage in school and learning.

We trust this information will begin to answer the questions your CFS Agencies or families and care providers may have. We will continue to adapt and respond within our sector the direction and guidance provided by public health.

Next webinar for the CFS Authorities and their Agencies, and Community Care Partners with Dr. Roussin will be on Friday, September 11, 2020 between 2:00-3:00pm. Register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/4138314786240248847>.

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