



# **Communicable Disease Prevention**

2023 / 2024

# Acknowledgment:

This document is based on guidance provided by the Provincial Health Officer, BC Communicable Disease Control, The Ministry of Education, WorkSafeBC, and Northern Health Authority.

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# Purpose

The purpose of this prevention plan is to provide SD60 staff, students and visitors with important guidance to reduce the risk of transmission of communicable diseases.

# **Key Principles**

The following principles will continue to guide the K-12 sector throughout the 2023-24 school year:

- Communicable disease prevention measures will continue to be aligned with public health guidance to support student and staff wellness.
- Using an inclusive and trauma-informed lens, with a focus on mental health and wellness.
- Focusing supports to address unique student and staff needs, recognizing the pandemic has impacted individuals and communities differently.
- Consulting and working with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples to address the unique educational and learning needs of their communities.
- Engaging and collaborating with parents/caregivers, staff, unions and community partners to develop local solutions when needed.
- As required by WorkSafeBC, all boards of education, independent school authorities & schools must ensure the health of their workers by ensuring that steps are taken to reduce the risk to workers from communicable diseases.
- The Provincial Health Officer or local Medical Health Officers may issue temporary provincial, regional or local recommendations or orders of additional prevention measures during times of increased communicable disease risk.

# Indigenous Students (First Nations, Metis and Inuit)

# First Nations Students Living on Reserve

First Nations have the authority to declare states of emergency and have responsibility for the education of their citizens. In the spirit of Reconciliation and consistent with the <u>Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act</u>, boards of education and independent schools (excluding First Nations independent schools) are expected to engage with First Nations communities who have First Nations learners living in community (on-reserve) enrolled in the school district/school as soon as possible to discuss school plans for upcoming school years. This will help to identify potential accommodations needed to support students who may not attend in-person classes.

First Nations may take increased safety measures to manage communicable diseases in their communities. This may mean that some First Nations learners will not attend inperson classes.

#### Indigenous Student Success and Achievement

Boards of education and independent school authorities are expected to continue to support equitable outcomes and opportunities for all Indigenous learners by maintaining

Indigenous student supports and collaboration with local First Nations, Indigenous and education partners. Boards/authorities are expected to collaborate with local First Nations, and other Indigenous partners, on any changes/updates to the delivery of any programs including "Indigenous language and culture programs, Indigenous support services, and other approved Indigenous programs."

Communicable disease outbreaks and pandemics have a disproportionate impact on First Nations and Indigenous communities. Schools will identify First Nations and Indigenous learners whose educational outcomes may be negatively impacted during periods of increased risk in communities and make accommodations to ensure these students are supported. The needs of First Nations and Indigenous learners who require additional supports will be planned for and prioritized in partnership with parents/caregivers and communities.

As per the <u>BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA)</u>, Boards of Education are also expected to engage with First Nations to identify the transportation needs of First Nations learners living on reserve. Collaboration between boards and First Nations is necessary to ensure there are equitable and safe transportation opportunities for students.

Additional considerations for boards/authorities include:

- Collaboration between educators and Indigenous support staff on the development of Indigenous students' learning plans, including ensuring the integration of language and culture into these plans.
- Awareness and sensitivity regarding the complex and devastating history that pandemics have had on many First Nations and Indigenous communities.
- Understanding that some First Nations families and communities may continue to take increased safety measures, which may mean that some students will not attend in-person instruction during periods of increased risk in communities.

#### Communication

Boards/authorities have an obligation to work with the First Nations they serve regarding learning plans for Nominal Roll students, Enhancement Agreement goals, Local Education Agreements, Joint Transportation Plans and Equity in Action Plans.

# Trauma-informed Practice

Trauma-informed practice is a compassionate lens of understanding what is helpful to all children, youth and adults, especially those who have experienced traumatic events. Trauma-informed practice includes:

- Providing inclusive and compassionate learning environments.
- Understanding coping strategies.
- Supporting independence.
- Helping to minimize additional stress or trauma by addressing individual needs of students and staff.

Educators and support staff should be aware of changes in student behaviour, including trauma-related behaviours which may include fear, hyperactivity, aggression, body aches and pain, depression, self-harming behaviours, excessive shyness, or withdrawal. To support educators and staff in identifying and responding to the needs of students who have experienced trauma, the Ministry has created <u>trauma-informed practice resources</u> that are available on the <u>erase (Expect Respect and a Safe Education) website</u>.

# **Regulatory Compliance**

School Districts have transitioned to communicable disease prevention plans. Communicable disease prevention focuses on reducing the risk of workplace transmission of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases, and includes both ongoing measures (e.g. hand hygiene, cleaning) and additional measures to be implemented as advised by public health.

School District 60 has referred to the following Authorities to ensure that all components of a comprehensive prevention plan have been captured in this document and implemented in all schools / buildings:

WorkSafeBC

Province of British Columbia COVID-19 Health & Safety Guidelines for K-12 Settings

BCCDC COVID19 Public Health Guidance for K-12 School Settings

Ministry of Education – COVID-12 Safe Schools

# WorkSafeBC

WorkSafeBC is a provincial agency dedicated to promoting safe and healthy workplaces across BC. They partner with workers and employers to prevent work-related injury, disease, and disability. Their services include education, prevention, compensation and support for injured workers, and no-fault insurance to protect employers and workers. WorkSafeBC has developed <u>Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers</u>. This guide describes a four-step process to help employers reduce the risk of communicable disease in their workplace, which involves understanding the level of risk in the workplace, application of the fundamentals and implementing appropriate measures, communicating policies and protocols to all workers, and updating measures and safeguards as required.

# **Communicable Disease Prevention Plan**

Communicable disease prevention plans focus on reducing the risk of transmission of communicable diseases (including COVID-19). The prevention plan will be available on the District website (<u>www.prn.bc.ca</u>), in all offices and posted on each safety board in all locations.

The prevention measures outlined below should be always in place. During times of increased communicable disease risk, public health may recommend additional prevention measures for schools to implement.

This plan applies to all District employees, students and visitors. All employees are required to review and follow the control measures and procedures within this Plan.

# **Communicable Disease Prevention Plan Reviews**

In collaboration with the site-based Joint Health & Safety Committee, Administrators / Supervisors are required to regularly review their site-based communicable prevention plans to ensure all current safety protocols are implemented and identify / correct any gaps in protocols.

Joint Health & Safety Committees are required to meet monthly to review prevention plans and conduct site Inspections.

# What is a Communicable Disease?

WorkSafeBC advises that a communicable disease is an illness caused by an infectious agent that can be transmitted by contact with infected individuals or their bodily discharges or fluids or by contact with contaminated surfaces or objects. Examples of communicable diseases that may circulate in a workplace include the common cold and seasonal influenza.

Communicable diseases are most commonly spread from an infected person through:

- Respiratory droplets/particles/aerosols when a person coughs or sneezes.
- Close personal contact, such as touching or shaking hands.
- Touching something contaminated with virus and then touching your eyes, nose or mouth before washing your hands.

# **Risk Identification and Assessment**

The assessment of risk with respect to communicable diseases is the jurisdiction of public health, specifically for our district this includes the Provincial Health Officer, BC Communicable Disease Control (BCCDC), and Northern Health Authority. The overall assessment of risk remains low for K-12.

School District Administration in collaboration with the site-based Joint Health & Safety Committees will regularly assess all the hazards within their operations, taking appropriate steps to eliminate or control the associated risk. This process is referred to as a risk assessment.

### **Transmission Risk Assessment**

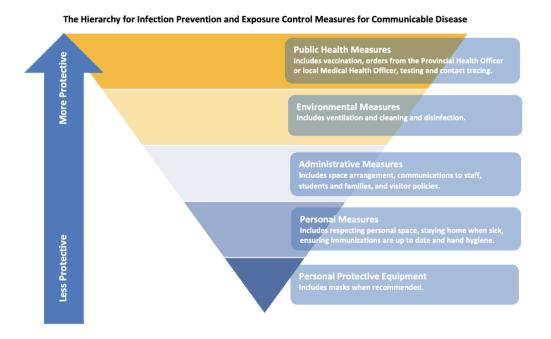
The District has identified general areas in schools where surfaces and other materials are touched often by staff and students, including toys, tech devices and high touch points throughout the building.

# **Infection Prevention & Exposure Control Measures**

Infection prevention and exposure control measures (also called communicable disease measures or health and safety measures) help create safe environments by reducing the spread of communicable diseases. These are more effective in settings such as schools where there is a relatively consistent grouping of people and multiple measures of various effectiveness can be routinely implemented, including:

- Robust illness policies for students and staff.
- Reinforcement and adoption of effective personal practices (e.g. hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette).
- Various environmental measures (e.g., enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices, ensuring HVAC systems are operating properly, etc.)

The Hierarchy for Infection Prevention and Exposure Control Measures for Communicable Disease describes measures that should be taken to reduce the transmission of communicable disease in schools. Control measures at the top are more effective and protective than those at the bottom. By implementing a combination of measures at each level, the risk of transmission is substantially reduced.



# **Controls Measures and Protocols in Place to Reduce Risk**

This section outlines the measures in place to reduce the risk of transmission of communicable disease in the school environment.

# **Promotion of Employee Vaccinations**

Vaccines are important tools to protect against serious outcomes of many communicable diseases, such as COVID-19 and influenza.

Public health strongly encourages all eligible students and staff to be fully vaccinated to protect themselves and those around them including those who are not eligible to be vaccinated.

SD60 will support and encourage Public Health messaging for vaccinations. SD60 recognizes the public health benefits of vaccination programs to reduce illness, disability and death from community acquired diseases.

Schools will provide spaces for public health nurses or other qualified health personnel to carry out their duties including immunizations.

# **Promotion of Employee Mental Health**

A communicable disease event may cause increased levels of stress or anxiety for employees. Some communicable diseases are new or evolved so the scientific facts about the hazards and risks of the disease may be unknown or uncertain. Uncertainty can increase stress and anxiety.

The District has provided staff, students and families with resources and tools to promote emotional health and wellness. Visit the District website for more information.

Resources

- School District 60 Website <u>www.prn.bc.ca</u>
- Employee & Family Assistance Program 1.800.668.2055
- <u>Canadian Mental Health Association</u>

# **Supportive School Environment**

District staff will support students to practice personal preventive measures by:

- Having staff model these behaviours.
- Sharing reliable information, including from the Ministry of Education, The BC Centre for Disease Control and the Office of the Provincial Health Officer, to parents, families and caregivers.
- Promoting safety measures in the school through the use of visual aids like signage and posters.

The staff will utilize positive and inclusive approaches to engage students in preventive practices and will not employ measures that are punitive or stigmatizing in nature.

Staff will also utilize a trauma-informed lens when planning school activities (e.g. gatherings and events) and interacting with other staff and students, including considerations around respecting others personal space.

# Access to Buildings

Visitors must follow all applicable communicable disease prevention measures outlined in this document.

# **Community Use of Facilities**

After hours, 3rd Party use of facilities is allowed in alignment with the School District 60 User Group Agreement and the measures outlined within this document.

# **Cleaning and Disinfecting Protocols**

Regular cleaning and disinfection is in place to prevent the transmission of communicable diseases from contaminated objects and surfaces.

The District's cleaning protocols for custodians can be found <u>here</u>. A poster for visual reference can be found <u>here</u>.

# Frequently Touched Surfaces

Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least once every 24 hours. Items include:

- Items used by multiple students and staff, including door knobs, light switches, hand railings, water fountains, faucet handles, toilet handles, tables, desks, chairs, manipulatives, and toys.
- Shared equipment (e.g. computer keyboards, PE/sports equipment, music equipment, etc.)
- Appliances (staff and students can share the use of appliances and other objects, but treat items like microwaves, refrigerators, coffee pots, photocopiers or laminators as frequently touched surfaces)
- Service counters (e.g., office service window, library circulation desk)
- Some frequently touched items like toys or manipulatives may not be able to be cleaned often (e.g. fabrics) or at all (e.g. sand, foam, playdough, etc.). These items can continue to be used, if hand hygiene is practiced before and after use.

#### Cleaning & Disinfecting Bodily Fluids

When cleaning and disinfecting bodily fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine), the procedures to follow are:

- Wear disposable gloves when cleaning blood or body fluids.
- Wash hands before wearing and after removing gloves.
- Follow regular health and safety procedures and regularly use PPE(e.g., gloves, Kevlar sleeves) for blood and bodily fluids (e.g. toileting, spitting, biting).

#### Laundry

Schools can use regular laundering practices.

# General Ventilation and Air Circulation

School District 60 will ensure that the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are operated and maintained as per standards and specifications required.

Provisions have been made should a school/worksite's ventilation system be temporarily compromised at any time.

In order to enhance the ventilation in classrooms, schools, and other office/work areas, classroom, other school-based staff, and other district staff can augment ventilation in the following ways:

- Move activities outdoors when possible (for example, lunch, classes, physical activity, classes) when appropriate and time, space, and weather permits.
- Open exterior windows to allow in outside air where possible and if weather permits.
- Ensure air vents are unimpeded (i.e. clear uninvents of any clutter, do not block, cover, or blank off vents in classrooms.).

# **Personal Protective Measures**

#### Health Awareness

Everyone should practice health awareness, including staying home when sick.

Prior to coming to school, everyone should perform a health check. A health check means a person regularly checking to ensure they (or their child) are not experiencing symptoms of illness (including but not limited to COVID-19 symptoms) that would limit their ability to participate fully in regular activities before coming to school to prevent spread of communicable diseases within school settings.

Staff, students and visitors are asked to stay home when sick and unable to participate fully in routine activities.

Schools do not need to monitor students or staff for symptoms of illness.

#### Masks & Face Coverings

The decision to wear a mask or face covering is a personal choice for staff, students and visitors. A person's choice should be supported and respected. Masks will be available at the office should a person choose to wear one.

#### Hand Hygiene

Hand washing with plain soap and water or using hand sanitizer reduces the spread of illness. Staff, students and visitors will be encouraged to practice frequent hand hygiene. To learn how to perform hand hygiene, please refer to Appendix A.

#### **Respiratory Etiquette**

Staff and students will be encouraged to practice good respiratory etiquette.

Staff have been provided the following direction:

- Cough and sneeze into their elbow, sleeve, or a tissue. Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene.
- Refrain from touching their eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands
- Refrain from sharing any food, drinks, unwashed utensils, cigarettes, or vaping devices.

#### Personal Space

Staff and students will be encouraged to respect others' personal space.

#### Sharing Items

Staff and students are encouraged to not share food, beverages & other items that touch the mouth. Items, such as instrument mouth pieces, must be cleaned and disinfected between use by different individuals.

# Illness Practices / What To Do When Sick

Staff, students, or other persons who are exhibiting new symptoms of illness (including symptoms of COVID-19 or gastrointestinal illness) should stay home and follow the guidance outlined on <u>BCCDC website</u>.

Those unsure or concerned about their symptoms should refer to the information on BCCDC website or connect with a health care provider or call 8-1-1. Staff, children, or other persons in the school setting should follow the guidance on the <u>BCCDC website</u> as to how long they should stay home. They can return to school when they no longer need

to self-isolate as long as symptoms have improved, and they are well enough to participate in regular activities.

Schools should not require a health care provider note (e.g., a doctor's note) to confirm the health status of any individual, beyond those required to support medical accommodation as per usual practice.

Staff, children, or other persons can attend school if their symptoms are consistent with a previously diagnosed health condition (e.g., seasonal allergies) or symptoms have improved enough to where they feel well enough to return to regular activities and their fever has resolved without the use of fever-reducing medication (e.g., ibuprofen, acetaminophen). Information specific to COVID-19 is available from <u>BCCDC</u>.

Students, staff, and other adults should follow public health guidance, BCCDC guidance, and/or the recommendation of their health care provider when they are sick.

If a student or staff member develops symptoms at school,

Schools will:

- Continue to have non-medical masks on hand for those who would like to wear one (for both the person who is sick and for those who may be assisting them).
- Make arrangements for the student/staff to go home as soon as possible
- Some students or staff may not be able to be picked up immediately. As such, schools will have a space available where the student or staff can wait comfortably and are separated from others
  - Younger children must be supervised when separated. Supervising staff can wear a non-medical mask, and should avoid touching bodily fluids as much as possible and practice diligent hand hygiene.
- Clean and disinfect the areas the student/staff used.
- Request that the individual stay home until symptoms have improved and they feel well enough to participate in all school-related activities.

# **Curriculum, Programs & Activities**

# Field Trips/Trades in Training/Work Experience Programs

Staff and students should follow the communicable disease prevention plan required by the workplace/facility or field trip venue. The more stringent (if applicable) between the school and the workplace/facility/field trip destination's communicable disease prevention plans.

# Food Safety

Staff, students or other persons will continue to follow routine food safety practices.

Schools providing food services will continue to adhere to the required measures under the Food Premises Regulation.

# Supporting Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities

The District has implemented health and safety measures that promote inclusion of students with disabilities/diverse abilities. Most students with disabilities/diverse abilities or medical complexity are not considered at greater risk of experiencing severe illness from communicable diseases.

Guidelines for Staff and/or Those Working with Students with Disabilities/Diverse Abilities, Complex Behaviors, Medical Complexities, or Receiving Delegated Care Where Physical Contact May Be Required

Staff and those providing services to students with medical complexity, immune suppression, receiving direct or delegated care, or with disabilities and diverse abilities who are in close proximity to a student should follow routine infection control practices and care plans for the child, if applicable.

Those providing health services in schools may receive guidance related to PPE from their regulatory college or employer. Health service providers are encouraged to work with their employer to confirm what PPE is recommended for the services they provide in school settings.

Parents and caregivers of children who are considered at higher risk of severe illness due to communicable disease (including COVID-19) are encouraged to consult with their health care provider to determine their child's level of risk. Students are not required to wear a mask or face covering when receiving services, though may continue to base on their or their parent/caregiver's personal choice.

# Buses

- Buses used for transporting students will be cleaned and disinfected according to the guidance provided in the Cleaning and Disinfecting section of this document.
- Bus drivers and passengers will practice diligent hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette while on the bus.
- Bus drivers and passengers may choose to wear masks or face coverings when they are on the bus.

# **Communication and Training / Orientation**

The District must follow WorkSafeBC communicable disease prevention guidance and must provide communication, training and orientation to ensure the health and safety of their workers.

#### Administrators and Supervisors

- Following guidelines outlined by both WorkSafeBC and the Ministry of Education, Administrators and Supervisors of SD60 have the following responsibilities:
  - Education of proper hand hygiene
  - Education of proper respiratory etiquette
  - o Increase and maintain required cleaning and disinfecting practices
  - Promote employee vaccinations
  - Encourage and promote employee health and well being
  - Follow absenteeism guidelines when over 10%

Administrators are to communicate the information provided in this plan and the District safety protocols with all staff on an ongoing basis.

NOTE: If there are site specific tasks or processes that are identified as a possible risk to staff that has not been identified in the District plan, Administrators will be required to investigate and conduct a risk assessment (with their JHSC) of those tasks or processes to determine if additional controls or measures need to be implemented.

#### Employees

Employees of the District are responsible to:

- Follow expectations set out by the District, Administrator or Supervisor
- Practice proper hand washing procedure and proper respiratory etiquette.
- Stay home when sick or displaying symptoms of illness
- School based staff instruct students with age-appropriate techniques, on the proper procedures for washing hands as well as proper respiratory etiquette.

Employees have three key rights:

- the right to know about hazards in the workplace;
- the right to participate in health and safety activities in the workplace; and
- the right to refuse unsafe work.

#### Staff and Student Awareness

To promote awareness and as a reminder:

- proper hand washing signs have been provided to be posted in washrooms and near hand washing sinks
- Masking requirements have been posted
- Respiratory Etiquette and respecting personal space posters have been provided to be posted throughout the buildings
- Floor markings have been installed throughout the buildings to promote awareness and educate staff and students on the importance of respecting personal space as much as possible.
- Education and training will be reviewed on an ongoing basis.

#### Workplace Monitoring

The District will continue to update staff and students with any new information for K-12 Schools provided by the Ministry of Education, BCCDC, Provincial Health Officer, WorksafeBC and/or the Local Health Authority.

#### **Occupational First Aid Attendants**

All Occupational First Aid Attendants will follow procedures in accordance with WorkSafeBC.

# **Additional Training**

Administrators will be responsible for ensuring TOCs, new hires, casual employees, staff returning from an extended absence and District staff from other locations have been orientated in the District safety protocols and SD60 Communicable Disease Prevention Plan.

#### **Emergency Procedures and Evacuation Drills**

The District emergency procedures remain unchanged at this time. Procedures can be found <u>here</u>.

Evacuation drills will continue to be practiced as required by the BC Fire Code.

In the event of an actual emergency, the communicable disease prevention measures may be suspended to ensure a timely and safe response.

# **Reporting Occupational Injuries or Illness**

The incident reporting process for all occupational injuries or illnesses remains unchanged. The reporting process flowchart can be found <u>here</u> and posted on the safety board in all locations.

# Staff Reporting Health & Safety Related Concerns

Should a staff member have any health and safety concerns, they are to report to their Administrator / Supervisor or the site-based Joint Health & Safety Committee. The safety committee contact information for each location is posted on the safety board in the staff room.

# Administrator Protocols for Managing Communicable Disease Activity at School

Most communicable diseases experienced by students and staff within school settings may be managed by the individual/family and through routine preventative measures, such as staying home from school until well enough to participate in regular activities. Resources are available to support management of routine communicable diseases, including <u>HealthLink BC</u>, the <u>BCCDC Guide to Common Childhood Diseases</u>, the <u>Sneezes and Diseases website</u>, and other school health resources hosted on health authority webpages (<u>Vancouver Coastal Health</u>; <u>Fraser Health</u>; <u>Interior Health</u>; <u>Island Health</u>; <u>Northern Health</u>).

Public health may become directly involved if certain reportable diseases, such as measles, are identified where there are effective interventions available to prevent further spread and protect against severe disease. Additional time-limited public health measures may also be implemented at the discretion of the local Medical Health Officer or the Provincial Health Officer in response to broader risk of communicable disease transmission in the community.

School or district administrators can contact public health if they have concerns about communicable disease transmission within the school setting and require additional support.

### **Communications and Protecting Personal Privacy**

Medical Health Officers play the lead role in determining if, when and how to communicate information regarding increased communicable disease activity within a school. Public health has encouraged schools to routinely communicate to their school community the need to follow any recommended public health measures, practice health awareness, and to stay home when sick. To protect personal privacy and to support accuracy, schools should exercise caution in providing communicable disease notifications beyond when they are recommended by public health.

# **Functional Closures**

A functional closure of a school is the temporary closure of a school determined by a school district or independent school authority due to a lack of staff to provide the required level of teaching, supervision, support, and/or custodial to ensure the health and safety of students. This would likely be due to a high number of staff or certain employees away who are required for a school to function, and the inability to temporarily replace them. School districts (or independent schools) should notify their Medical Health Officer and the Ministry of Education and Child Care (educ.covid@gov.bc.ca) when they are considering or implementing a functional closure.

# **Public Health Closure**

A public health closure is the temporary closing of a school ordered by a Medical Health Officer when they determine it is necessary to prevent the excessive transmission of a communicable disease.

# Appendix: A Key Contacts, Additional Resources & Links

- Board of education questions regarding collective agreements or employment related matters can be directed to the <u>BC Public School Employers' Association</u>
- > Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- > Medical Health Officer Contact Information by Health Authority (general inquiries):
  - Island Health T: 1 800 204 6166
  - Fraser Health T: (604) 918-7532
  - <u>Northern Health</u> T: (250) 565-2000 E:<u>healthyschools@northernhealth.ca</u>
  - Interior Health T: (250) 469-7070 (ext. 12791)
  - Vancouver Coastal Health T: (604) 527-4893
  - First Nation Health Authority T: (604) 693-6500
- Special Educational Services: A Manual of Policy, Practices and Guidelines (point of reference providing legislation, policy and guidelines to support the delivery of inclusive education supports and services)
- Resources for parents/caregivers of children with disabilities and diverse abilities
- Provincial Outreach Programs are available to support boards/authorities through professional learning, resources, consultation and training during recovery.
- Indigenous Education in British Columbia
- Indigenous Education Teaching Tools and Resources
- BC Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA)
- Métis Nation BC Chartered Communities
- WorkSafeBC Communicable disease prevention (G-P2-21)
- WorkSafeBC Communicable disease prevention: A guide for employers
- WorkSafeBC Communicable disease prevention webpage
- Building Compassionate Communities in a New Normal webinar
- Linda O'Neill Trauma Informed in the Classroom 15
- MCFD: Healing Families, Helping Systems: A Trauma-Informed Practice Guide for Working with Children, Youth and Families