



January 12, 2022

COVID-19 FAQ #5 – 2021-2022

In this COVID-19 FAQ, you will find information on: health and safety; remote learning; virtual classroom expectations; assessment and reporting; health and safety inspections; and federal benefits.

Frequently Asked Questions

Classes have only been moved online until January 17. What will make it safer to return to in-person learning?

To safely return to in-person learning, and to provide the greatest level of protection to Ontario's students, Teachers, other education workers, and communities, ETFO continues to call on the Ford government to:

- make N95 masks available to all education workers;
- mandate masks for all students and education workers;
- ensure everyone working in or attending a school who can be safely vaccinated is vaccinated, and those who are unvaccinated are being tested per Ministry of Education guidance;
- prioritize booster shots for education workers;
- improve ventilation and install HEPA filters in all classrooms and public/shared spaces in schools;
- reduce class sizes to promote physical distancing;
- implement robust testing and contact tracing programs;
- ensure education workers and students have access to COVID-19 vaccines and rapid antigen tests;
- return to monitoring and reporting COVID-19 cases/outbreaks in schools, and ensuring schools communities are made aware of these cases/outbreaks, especially those who are close contacts;
- address an anticipated increase in staff absences due to COVID-related illness and/or isolation; and
- expand the paid sick leave program immediately.

I think I contracted COVID-19 while at work. What do I do if I am unable to access a PCR test to confirm a COVID-19 diagnosis?

Make sure to contact your doctor immediately if you believe you contracted COVID-19 at work, and tell them that you think you contracted it at work. Document your attempts

to access health care and/or treatment; this is especially important if there is any delay in PCR testing. In addition, if you have access to rapid testing, you may want to take a rapid test and photograph and time stamp the results. This may be useful in establishing a work-related connection.

Keep a log or journal documenting your potential exposures in the three days prior to onset of symptoms, and keep track of your symptoms, including any secondary mental health symptoms.

As with any workplace injury or illness, follow all Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) reporting obligations without delay. Complete a worker's Form 6* and notify your employer. You can find WSIB Form 6 [here](#). Keep a copy of the form for your records.

If you believe you were exposed to COVID in the workplace, but do not yet have symptoms or a diagnosis, please complete a WSIB Workers Exposure Incident Form available on the [WSIB website](#).

If in-person instruction resumes, what should I do if a student arrives at school displaying COVID-19 symptoms?

If a student comes to school displaying symptoms, follow the procedures for isolation and contact with the home that are in place in your school board. You may also wish to contact your local ETFO office for support.

I work in special education, and I'm back at school. Most of the students can't mask consistently, and the N95s haven't arrived yet. How can I stay safe?

The government has acknowledged that N95s are appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers in schools; they should be provided immediately, especially to those working with unmasked or vulnerable students. Ensure the seal around your N95 mask or respirator has no gaps. Other things to consider:

- Students in school should be limited to those who cannot be accommodated at home.
- Rigorous screening should be conducted for workers and students.
- Mask exemptions should be re-evaluated by administration.
- Overall movement of staff should be limited and consideration should be given to limiting the number of sites open.
- Rooms with adequate ventilation should be used, those ventilation systems should be assessed and monitored, and additional HEPA filtration units should be moved into these rooms.
- Ensure a risk assessment is done based on the new circumstances including a review of the safety plan with contingency plans to anticipate staff absences.

You may also wish to contact your local ETFO office for support.

What information is available from ETFO to support members teaching virtually?

ETFO's position on in-person learning remains unchanged. The Federation firmly believes that in-person instruction and learning provides the best experience and is the most equitable model for all students. ETFO continues to demand action from the

government, school boards, and public health units to ensure in-person learning can resume quickly, safely, and sustainably.

ETFO has created the following resources, which are available [here](#), to help members navigate this emergency virtual environment:

- Asynchronous and Recording;
- Creating Access to Learning for Students;
- Protecting Yourself;
- Teaching in a Virtual Environment;
- Technology Use During a Pandemic;
- Tips for Parents;
- Understanding Copyright; and
- Understanding Your Professional Judgement in the Virtual Environment.

How can I communicate virtual classroom rules and expectations to families?

Check to see if your school board has guidelines for families that focus specifically on virtual learning. If your board does not have specific guidelines, many have an online code of conduct. It may be helpful to:

- Clearly communicate your expectations for a successful virtual learning classroom.
- Connect with other educators and your administration for ideas and consistency.
- Remind families that the virtual environment is a classroom and that all board and provincial policies and protocols are in effect. This includes Teachers having authority over the classroom, subject content, and classroom management.
- Consider communicating these rules and expectations by email, parent/teacher conferences, poster/infographic, newsletter, video, and/or invitation to a virtual class meeting.

What should I consider sharing about family participation in virtual classrooms?

In the same way you would for a physical classroom, it is important to share your rules and expectations for establishing a welcome, respectful, productive learning environment for both you and students. Information to consider sharing includes:

- expectations/routines for late students, absences, and submission of student work;
- how families can assist their child(ren) in navigating the online environment;
- protocol for communicating with you directly if there are any questions or concerns;
- clear privacy guidelines. Parents/guardians/caregivers should:
 - not join online classes or be visible on screens during classes;
 - avoid engaging with their child during classroom time;
 - not prompt or provide answers; students should complete tasks independently;
 - not video record, audio record, photograph or transmit in any other way any part of the virtual classroom or lesson;
 - not post any classroom images/video on social media platforms; and

- be reminded that posted materials are intended for students only. Materials should not be copied or shared, including meeting links.

It seems that I am being asked to communicate with families on demand, all throughout the day. How do I set expectations and limits?

Parent-teacher communication is an important part of student well-being and success. Here are some effective strategies that will support optimal communication:

- Determine your preferred process for communicating with families.
- Post and share this process in a variety of places and update it as required.
- Be consistent in your communication and responses to families.
- Discourage parents/guardians/caregivers from sending questions to you through students. Remind them of your preferred communication process for inquiries.
- Remind them that you work directly with students during the school day and that you will respond when you are available.
- Consider linking to an FAQ in your email signature to reduce repeated emails.

What should I keep in mind when preparing for Term 1 Report Cards and Kindergarten Communication of Learning?

ETFO continues to make clear with the Ministry of Education that the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic is continuing to impact teaching, assessment, and evaluation practices. For the end of Term 1 reporting, members should use their professional judgment to:

- determine how best to evaluate and summarize student evidence for reporting purposes;
- determine grades/ratings; and
- determine the depth and breadth of comments.

Teachers are expected to have assessment data in their record-keeping that substantiates the grades, ratings, and comments they use for reporting.

As school boards may have unique reporting requirements, members should seek further direction from their local ETFO office regarding how to complete Term 1 Report Cards/Kindergarten Communication of Learning.

For further information, refer to the ETFO *Professional Judgement Guidelines for the Completion of the Elementary Provincial Report Cards – Grades 1 to 8* and *Guidelines for Completion of the Kindergarten Communication of Learning Report*. Both can be found [here](#).

Do I need to report on Social Emotional Learning (SEL) in Mathematics and/or Health and Physical Education?

No. The Ministry of Education has said that, in the 2021-2022 school year, schools will not assess, evaluate, or report on the overall expectations related to SEL skills in *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8 Mathematics (2020)* and *The Ontario Curriculum, Grades 1-8, Health and Physical Education (2019)*. The Ministry expects the instruction of SEL skills will continue while educators engage in ongoing professional learning.

What is happening with health and safety inspections and Joint Health and Safety (JHSC) meetings when schools are closed to most in-person learning?

Ontario schools are not closed and ETFO members are continuing to work. There continue to be workers in schools, including those who are working in some special education roles or who need to go to school to be able to teach online.

The employer continues to have a responsibility for a safe working environment. JHSC meetings must continue to discuss and address health and safety concerns. Inspections must be done monthly to identify and eliminate hazards. Please ensure that this is happening in your board and at your school. If your employer is not ensuring meetings and inspections are continuing, contact the Ministry of Labour.

What COVID-related benefits are available if I need to be off work?

Prior to the Winter Break, the provincial government announced the [extension of paid infectious disease emergency leave](#) under the *Employment Standards Act* to July 31, 2022. This leave, which comprises a total of three sick days with a maximum reimbursement of \$200 per day, is for workers who do not have access to paid sick leave. Members who perform daily occasional work and are required to self-isolate should be able to access this paid infectious disease emergency leave. Please contact your board Human Resources department/contact for more information.

In addition, there are currently two federal benefits available to any workers who meet the criteria:

1. The [Canada Recovery Caregiving Benefit \(CRCB\)](#) has been extended until May 7, 2022. The maximum number of weeks you can apply for has increased to 44 weeks. If you are eligible for the CRCB, your household can receive \$500 (\$450 after taxes withheld) for each one-week period.

Members may be eligible if they are unable to work at least 50 per cent of their scheduled work week because they are caring for a family member who needs supervised care because they:

- are home because their school/daycare/day program/care facility/regular care service is closed or unavailable due to COVID-19; or
- are sick with COVID-19; or
- have symptoms of COVID-19; or
- are at serious risk of health complications if they get COVID-19, as advised by a medical professional; or
- are self-isolating due to COVID-19.

2. The [Canada Recovery Sickness Benefit \(CRSB\)](#) has been extended until May 7, 2022. The maximum number of weeks you can apply for has increased to six weeks.

Members may be eligible to apply if they are unable to work at least 50 per cent of their scheduled work week because they are self-isolating for one of the following reasons:

- they are sick with COVID-19 or may have COVID-19;

- they have been advised to self-isolate due to COVID-19;
- they have an underlying health condition that puts them at greater risk of getting COVID-19; and/or
- they are not self-isolating due to international travel.

Please note that members with access to paid sick leave are not eligible for CRSB.

Some members may also be eligible for [Employment Insurance \(EI\) benefits](#).

For further information on eligibility and how to apply, visit the websites linked above.

For other information, please check [ETFO's dedicated COVID-19 webpage](#).