

LHD Guidance to Help Prevent, Manage, and Report COVID-19 Clusters & Flu/ILI Outbreaks in Educational Settings

Preventing an outbreak/cluster: To help reduce the spread of COVID-19, Influenza and other respiratory viruses among students and staff in educational settings, we recommend the following:

- [Seasonal flu vaccine](#) is the best way to protect against flu and it is recommended for everyone 6 months or older.
- COVID-19 vaccines are effective at protecting people from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, and dying. Current COVID-19 vaccination recommendations for everyone can be found [here](#).
- Consider working with school administrations to [organize flu & COVID-19 vaccine events/clinics](#) throughout the respiratory illness season, even in January or later when influenza viruses are spreading.
- Share reminders about everyday preventive actions with school administrators and consider [organizing workshops](#) about [recommendations](#) to protect against COVID-19, the flu and other respiratory viruses.
- Be aware of [local respiratory virus transmission trends](#) to communicate to school administrators.

Managing an outbreak/cluster

- Ensure procedures are in place to monitor the progress of outbreak/cluster including establishing one or more points of contact within schools.
- Share flu education materials about [actions schools can take when someone gets sick](#), including information on signs and symptoms of [severe illness and groups at higher risk](#).
- Share guidance for [COVID-19 prevention](#) in schools and childcare programs.
- Recommend that ill staff and students visit their healthcare providers for testing.

Reporting an outbreak/cluster

- Work with schools in your district to [establish absenteeism and/or cases thresholds](#). **Preferably this should be done at the beginning of the school season.**
- In the absence of agreed-upon thresholds, [we recommend the following for educational settings with less than 150 students](#):
 - Five or more laboratory-confirmed cases within 7 days with evidence of epidemiologic linkage between cases OR
 - Ten or more laboratory-confirmed cases within 7 days associated with the same setting or facility in the absence of specific information about epidemiologic linkage
- In the absence of agreed-upon thresholds, [we recommend the following for educational settings with more than 150 students and less than 1000 students](#):
 - Five or more laboratory-confirmed cases within 7 days with evidence of epidemiologic linkage between cases OR

- Fifteen or more laboratory-confirmed cases within 7 days associated with the same setting or facility in the absence of specific information about epidemiologic linkage
- In the absence of agreed-upon thresholds, we recommend the following for educational settings with more than 1000 students:
 - Five or more laboratory-confirmed cases within 7 days with evidence of epidemiologic linkage between cases OR
 - Twenty or more laboratory-confirmed cases within 7 days associated with the same setting or facility in the absence of specific information about epidemiologic linkage
- **Based on local policies, experience and knowledge of local facilities, and other local factors, LHDs may choose to investigate and report COVID-19 clusters or flu/ILI outbreaks that do not meet the above criteria.** LHDs may wish to consult with the Communicable Disease Branch or the Epi On-Call at 919-733-3419 in these circumstances.