

MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC BOARD OF EDUCATION OPERATES AS MEDICINE HAT PUBLIC SCHOOL DIVISION, AND FOR THE PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT WILL BE REFERRED TO AS "MHPSD" AND/OR "DIVISION"

SECTION 500 – Personnel and Employee Relations

POLICY 546: COVID-19 HARM REDUCTION POLICY

*This policy is in effect immediately. Staff will have until **November 30th, 2021** to bring themselves into compliance.*

BACKGROUND

COVID-19 represents an identifiable workplace hazard. COVID-19 is an acute respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) and related variants. Exposure to the virus(es) typically occurs through: (1) inhalation of fine respiratory droplets and aerosol particles; (2) deposit of respirator droplets and particles on exposed mucous membranes in the mouth, nose, or eye by a direct splash or spray; or (3) touching mucous membranes with hands that have been soiled by virus-containing respiratory fluids (or touching surfaces with the virus on them).

Typical symptoms include fever, cough, shortness of breath, and several other symptoms. Asymptomatic infection is also possible. The risk of severe disease and death increases with age and is elevated in those with underlying medical conditions and those who are pregnant. Previously, younger persons have been less likely to develop serious illness or death, however, the emergence of variant strains have seen increasing hospitalization rates and death among younger age groups.

Our division has identified multiple cases of confirmed COVID-19 infection in all sites, among both its staff and student population, notwithstanding attempts to control spread through administrative controls (including social distancing and cohorting) and through personal protective equipment (such as masking). The failure of these existing measures to limit the risk of the COVID-19 hazard intensifies the need for this policy.

POLICY

Medicine Hat Public School Division ("the Division") is committed to providing safe and healthy learning and working environments. The Division commits to protecting students and employees from injury, illness, and accidents as required by Occupational Health and Safety Legislation, the Education Act, and common law. Transmittable diseases, including COVID-19, are identifiable workplace hazards. Such hazards can have a detrimental effect on health and safety, Division operations, student learning, employee productivity, Division costs, and employee morale. The Division has legal obligations to take all reasonable steps to identify, eliminate, and control workplace hazards like COVID-19.

The purpose of this policy is to mitigate the risk of spread of COVID-19 infection in all Division facilities to protect staff, students, and their families from the highly contagious illness during a global pandemic.

SCOPE

This policy and administrative procedure apply to:

- All employees.
- Persons carrying out duties or activities on Division property.
- Volunteers of the Division.
- Parents, guardians and members of the public accessing Division property.
- Bus Drivers.
- Any employees newly hired to the Division on or after November 30th, 2021, will require proof of vaccination or proof of rapid testing as a condition of employment.

TEMPORARY POLICY

This policy is temporary. Current rates of transmission in Alberta indicate rapidly increasing numbers of individuals are exposed to COVID-19. The Division will re-evaluate the need for this policy when the government and medical authorities no longer support the identification of COVID-19 as a workplace hazard. The Board of Trustees will review this policy for amendment or elimination a minimum of every 6 months, or as deemed necessary.

GENERAL GUIDELINES

1. All employees are required to be **fully immunized** against COVID-19 no later than November 30th, 2021.
 - 1.1. If an employee is unable to comply with being/becoming immunized, they must comply with semi-weekly COVID-19 rapid testing requirements at their own expense.
 - 1.2. Any employee who requires an exemption to this policy must inform the Division before November 30, 2021, or as soon as reasonably possible.

APPLICATION

The administration and application of this policy will be pursuant to administrative procedure 546 P 001 – COVID-19 Harm Reduction Policy.

TERMS

COVID-19: Refers to the virus designated “coronavirus 2 (SARS-COV-2) and all of its variants” or the symptoms of that virus where the context requires.

Division: Means Medicine Hat Public School Division.

Employee: Means any and every employee of the Division while such individual is performing services on behalf of the Division or on Division property.



Fully Immunized: Refers to receiving the required number of doses of vaccine as per Health Canada guidelines. See “vaccine” for further information.

Human Resources: Refers to the Human Resources Department of the Division.

Policy: Means the COVID-19 Harm Reduction Policy.

Rapid Test: Refers to any testing devices authorized by Health Canada and approved by the Division.

Vaccine: Refers to any vaccine approved by Health Canada for inoculation against COVID-19. Currently this includes: the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine (2 doses required); the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine (2 doses required); AstraZeneca COVID-19 vaccine (2 doses required); and the Janssen (Johnson & Johnson) COVID-19 vaccine (1 dose required)

REFERENCES

ALBERTA HUMAN RIGHTS ACT, RSA 2000, c. A-25.5

[546 P 001 – COVID-19 Harm Reduction](#)

Approved: October 12, 2021

