

# Practice Education Guidelines for BC Communicable Disease Outbreaks

July 2021

## Intent / Purpose

- Outline the roles and responsibilities for Post-Secondary Institution (PSI) Students and Educators in preventing the transmission of communicable diseases and managing communicable disease outbreaks.
- Outline the options for managing current and future practice education experiences in the event of a communicable disease outbreak within Health Care Organization (HCO) practice education settings.

## Definitions

Refer to: [Standard Terms and Abbreviations](#)

<i>Additional Precautions</i>	"Extra measures, when routine practices alone may not interrupt transmission of an infectious agent. They are used in addition to routine practices (not in place of), and are initiated both on condition/clinical presentation (syndrome) and on specific etiology (diagnosis)." <sup>1</sup> Examples of additional precautions: contact precautions, droplet precautions, airborne precautions
<i>Communicable disease</i>	"Communicable, or infectious diseases, are caused by microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites and fungi that can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another. Some are transmitted through bites from insects while others are caused by ingesting contaminated food or water." <sup>2</sup>
<i>Exposure – Communicable Disease</i>	Direct or indirect contact with a person who has an unknown, suspected, or known infection with a communicable disease. Can occur through (but not limited to) percutaneous, mucosal, dermal, respiratory, or digestive route <sup>3</sup>  "The condition of being subject to an infectious disease through contact with an infected person or a contaminated environment" <sup>4</sup> (e.g. inanimate/animate object or particles in the air). <sup>5</sup>
<i>Outbreak</i>	"...the occurrence of disease cases in excess of normal expectancy. The number of cases varies according to the disease-causing agent, and the size and type of previous and existing exposure to the agent." <sup>6</sup>
<i>Personal Protective Equipment</i>	"...a worker's last defence against injury and death, when eliminating workplace hazards is not possible" <sup>7</sup> Includes eye and face protection (masks, face shields, safety glasses or goggles), gloves, protective apparel (gowns, aprons), respiratory protection.
<i>Risk, Levels of (related to exposure)</i>	<i>Low risk</i> ... workers who rarely come into contact with potentially infected people or materials. <i>Moderate risk</i> ... workers who rarely come into contact with infected people, but who may work in areas where infected people have been, or who handle potentially contaminated items (indirect contact) <i>High risk</i> ... workers who work directly with people who are or may be infected." <sup>8</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC). (November 2016). *Routine Practice and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings*. Pg. 167. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/routine-practices-precautions-healthcare-associated-infections.html>

<sup>2</sup> World Health Organization: Regional Office for Africa. (2017). *Communicable Diseases Overview*. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from <https://www.afro.who.int/health-topics/communicable-diseases>

<sup>3</sup> Fraser Health Authority. (2014). *Communicable Disease – Prevention and Management of Occupational Exposure*. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from <https://www.fraserhealth.ca/-/media/Project/FraserHealth/FraserHealth/About-Us/Accountability/Policies/CommunicableDiseasePreventionManagementOccupationalExposure-Policy-201403.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> WorkSafeBC. (2009). *Controlling Exposure: Protecting Workers from Infectious Disease*. Pg. 59. Retrieved December 28, 2020 from <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/books-guides/controlling-exposure-protecting-workers-from-infectious-disease>

<sup>5</sup> PHAC. Pg. 19.

<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization. (n.d.). *Environmental health in emergencies – Disease outbreaks*. Retrieved January 11, 2021 from <https://www.who.int/teams/environment-climate-change-and-health/emergencies/disease-outbreaks/>

<sup>7</sup> WorkSafeBC. (nd). *Personal protective equipment (PPE)*. Retrieved February 25, 2020 from <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/health-safety/tools-machinery-equipment/personal-protective-equipment-ppe>

<sup>8</sup> Ibid. (2009). *Controlling Exposure: Protecting Workers from Infectious Disease*. Pg. 32.

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<i>Routine practices</i>	"A comprehensive set of infection prevention and control measures that have been developed for use in the routine care of all patients at all times in all healthcare settings. Routine practices aim to minimize or prevent healthcare-associated infections in all individuals in the healthcare setting, including patients, healthcare workers, other staff, visitors and contractors." <sup>9</sup>  Examples of routine practices: education, hand hygiene, sharps safety, personal protective equipment, routine cleaning, safe handling of food <sup>10</sup>
<i>Transmission</i>	"The process whereby an infectious agent passes from a source and causes infection in a susceptible host." <sup>11</sup>

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## Practice Education Guidelines

All Students and on-site PSI Educators, having a role in outbreak prevention and management,<sup>12</sup>:

- Complete the relevant pre-requisites and orientation requirements (see [PEG Orientation – Students](#); [PEG Orientation On-Site Post-Secondary Institution Educators](#)) before the beginning of the practice education experience.
- Consistently use routine practices and HCO-specific policies for infection prevention and control while in the practice education setting.

HCOs supply the necessary personal protective equipment (PPE) to Students and on-site Educators required for safe client care.<sup>13</sup>

HCOs and PSIs follow provincial guidelines for allocating and supplying PPE in situations where demand overwhelms supply so that Students and on-site Educators have access to the PPE they need to continue the practice education experience.<sup>14, 15</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Public Health Agency of Canada. (November 2016). *Routine Practices and Additional Precautions for Preventing the Transmission of Infection in Healthcare Settings*. Pg. 176. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from <https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/routine-practices-precautions-healthcare-associated-infections.html>

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. Pg. 9 & 26.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid. Pg. 176.

<sup>12</sup> Provincial Health Services Authority. (2016). *IC 08.01 Outbreak Management*. Pg. 1. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from <http://policyandorders.cw.bc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Infection%20Control/IC%2008%2001%20Outbreak%20Management%20final%20August%202016.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC). (August 2020). *Student Practice Education Guideline for HealthCare Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Pg. 7. Retrieved December 6, 2020 from [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19\\_StudentPracticeEducationGuidelineHCS.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_StudentPracticeEducationGuidelineHCS.pdf) on <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/clinical-care>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. (March 2020). *COVID-19: Emergency Prioritization in a Pandemic – Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) Allocation Framework*. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control/personal-protective-equipment#Provincial-PPE--supply>

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In the event of a **vaccine-preventable** communicable disease<sup>16</sup> outbreak during or just before a practice education experience within a HCO site or geographic area (see [PEG Communicable Disease Prevention](#)) and depending on the type of outbreak:

- Any unvaccinated Student or on-site Educator could be excluded from the practice education setting until:
  - the period of communicability has passed; **or**
  - the outbreak is declared over by the HCO; **or**
  - after a specified period of time (determined by the HCO Medical Health Officer) should the Student or Educator choose to be vaccinated against the disease
- Any Student or Educator who cannot provide proof of vaccine and/or immunity status when requested might not be allowed into the practice education setting until that individual can present proof, depending on the setting, the level of risk, and the type of practice education experience.
- If necessary, the HCO and PSI work together to try and find alternate and appropriate practice placement experiences in unaffected settings within the HCO so as to promote continuity of the practice education experience while protecting all involved.

In the event of a communicable disease outbreak within a HCO site or geographic area during or just before a practice education experience **not preventable** by immunization/vaccination (such as gastrointestinal infections<sup>17</sup>, some respiratory infections<sup>18</sup>):

- When the planned practice education experience is in a single location within a site, the HCO could allow a practice education experience to continue if the Students and/or Educators:
  - were in the location just before and during the initial outbreak, therefore possibly already exposed; and
  - limit the planned practice education experience to the outbreak area only; and
  - are educated in and able to perform relevant infection prevention and control precautions as well as additional precautions as needed

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<sup>16</sup> Immunize Canada. (2019). *Diseases and Vaccines*. Retrieved August 2, 2019 from <https://www.immunize.ca/diseases-vaccines>

<sup>17</sup> Provincial Infection Control Network of British Columbia (PICNET BC). (2013). *Gastrointestinal Infection Outbreak Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities*. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from [https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/PICNet-GI-Outbreak-Guidelines\\_Revised-June-2016.pdf](https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/PICNet-GI-Outbreak-Guidelines_Revised-June-2016.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> Ibid. (2018). *Respiratory Infection Outbreak Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities*. Pg. 35-37. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from [https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/Respiratory-Infection-Outbreak-Guidelines-for-Healthcare-Facilities\\_November-2018.pdf](https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/Respiratory-Infection-Outbreak-Guidelines-for-Healthcare-Facilities_November-2018.pdf)

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- When the planned practice education experience involves moving between areas or rotating through different areas (within a site, between sites, or between geographic locations), the HCO could allow the practice education experience to continue:<sup>19,20</sup>
  - either in the affected or unaffected area(s), but not both\*; **or**
  - either involving the affected or unaffected Client(s), but not both\*

Examples:

When an on-site PSI Educator supervises Students in multiple areas and one area becomes an outbreak location, the Students and Educator would be limited to the unaffected areas until the outbreak is declared over to limit the spread of infection.

When Students moves between multiple areas (with or without their supervising PSI Educator or HCO Supervisor) and one area becomes an outbreak location, the Student would be limited to the unaffected areas or the affected area, but not both, to limit the spread of infection.

**\*Note:** Students of specific disciplines could be exempted from this by the Medical Health Officer.

- If necessary, the HCO and PSI work together to try and find alternate and appropriate practice placement experiences in unaffected settings within the HCO or another HCO so as to promote continuity of the practice education experience while protecting all involved.

In the event of a **public health emergency** (endemic, epidemic, or pandemic):<sup>21</sup>

- Both PSIs and HCOs have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their people.
- Either or both could assess the care and learning environment and decide to suspend, delay, or modify current and/or future practice education experiences from the original request.
- Either or both consult with the HCO Medical Health Officer when significant delays or impacts to learning are anticipated.
- All parties follow provincial guidelines (such as the [Student Practice Education Guideline for Health-Care Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic](#)) as well as any orders, notices, or guidance issued by the Provincial Health Officer.

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<sup>19</sup> PICNET BC. (2018). *Respiratory Infection Outbreak Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities*. Pg. 19 & 21. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from [https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/Respiratory-Infection-Outbreak-Guidelines-for-Healthcare-Facilities\\_November-2018.pdf](https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/Respiratory-Infection-Outbreak-Guidelines-for-Healthcare-Facilities_November-2018.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Ibid. (2013). *Gastrointestinal Infection Outbreak Guidelines for Healthcare Facilities*. Pg. 24. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from [https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/PICNet-GI-Outbreak-Guidelines\\_Revised-June-2016.pdf](https://www.picnet.ca/wp-content/uploads/PICNet-GI-Outbreak-Guidelines_Revised-June-2016.pdf)

<sup>21</sup> BCCDC. (August 2020). *Student Practice Education Guideline for HealthCare Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Retrieved December 6, 2020 from [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19\\_StudentPracticeEducationGuidelineHCS.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_StudentPracticeEducationGuidelineHCS.pdf)

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The HCO Medical Health Officer/Infection Prevention and Control Practitioner (as part of declaring an outbreak, determining the duration of control measures, and declaring the outbreak over) determines the conditions with which to allow or limit Students and/or Educators to enter the affected area.<sup>22</sup>

In the event that a Student or Educator becomes symptomatic with an infectious or communicable disease during the practice education experience, they remove themselves from the practice education setting as soon as possible and do not return until it is deemed safe according to the infection prevention and control precautions for that disease – as determined by the HCO Medical Health Officer or designate.

Before cancelling or significantly modifying a program cohort or practice education experience:<sup>23</sup>

- HCOs work with their senior leaders, Medical Health Officer, Ministry of Health representatives, other HCOs, and PSI partners to explore possible alternatives.
- PSIs work with Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training representatives and their HCO partners to explore possible alternatives.

## Roles, Responsibilities and Expectations

### *Post-Secondary Institutions*

- Ensure Students and Educators meet all the relevant pre-requisites before or at the start of the practice education experience, such as:
  - vaccine and immunity status (see [PEG Communicable Disease Prevention](#))
  - HCO 'core' orientation topics: Hand Hygiene Basics, Infection Control and Prevention (see [PEG Orientation – Students](#); [PEG Orientation On-Site Post-Secondary Institution Educators](#))
  - Respiratory Fit Testing (see [PEG Respiratory Protection](#))
- Provide education Students on basic routine practices, including hand hygiene, putting on and taking off PPE, routine cleaning, safe food handling, and relevant additional precautions.
- Provide Students with opportunities to practice the skills and achieve mastery before the practice education experience.

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<sup>22</sup> Provincial Health Services Authority. (2016). *IC 08.01 Outbreak Management*. Pg. 4. Retrieved August 8, 2019 from <http://policyandorders.cw.bc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Infection%20Control/IC%2008%2001%20Outbreak%20Management%20final%20August%202016.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> BCCDC. (August 2020). *Student Practice Education Guideline for HealthCare Settings during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Pg. 6. Retrieved December 6, 2020 from [http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19\\_StudentPracticeEducationGuidelineHCS.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/COVID19_StudentPracticeEducationGuidelineHCS.pdf)

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- Work with the HCO Practice Education Coordinator and/or manager (or delegate) to determine the best approach in the event of an outbreak, such as suspending, delaying, extending, or changing the experience to an unaffected setting within the HCO or a different HCO.
- Only cancel or significantly modify practice education experiences or program cohorts after all other possible alternatives have been explored and discussed with Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training representatives and HCO partners.

### *Students / Educators*

- Maintain a record of vaccines and relevant test results (examples: [Immunize BC Immunization Record card](#), [CANImmunize.ca](#) app, or other individual-held records) as well as proof of any medical contraindications.<sup>24</sup>
- Master all basic routine practices and relevant additional precaution measures before the practice education experience.
- Complete all relevant pre-requisites and orientation requirements, such as:
  - screening and vaccinations (see [PEG Communicable Disease Prevention](#))
  - HCO 'core' orientation topics: Hand Hygiene Basics, Infection Control and Prevention (see [PEG Orientation – Students](#); [PEG Orientation On-Site Post-Secondary Institution Educators](#))
  - Respiratory Fit Testing (see [PEG Respiratory Protection](#))
- Report vaccine and immunity status to the PSI, including proof of screening and vaccine history.
- Report vaccine and immunity status to the HCO, including proof of screening and vaccine history when requested.
- Follow HCO standard routine practices, and infection prevention and control precautions at all times.
- Take reasonable steps to minimize the risk of exposure to and transmission of infectious and communicable diseases.
- Follow additional precautions when indicated.
- Refrain from moving or crossing from affected to unaffected areas and vice versa.
- Follow HCO and PSI protocols for reporting suspected or known exposure to an infectious/communicable disease.

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<sup>24</sup> BCCDC. (October 2020). *Communicable Disease Control Manual Chapter 2: Immunization; Part 1 – Immunization Schedules*. Pg. 4. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from [http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%20-%20Imms/Part\\_1\\_Schedules.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%20-%20Imms/Part_1_Schedules.pdf)

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- Contact the PSI and HCO Practice Education Coordinators (and, in the case of a Student, the HCO Supervisor) if issues arise during the practice education experience that could affect the Student's ability to successfully complete the experience.
- If experiencing any signs and symptoms of an infectious or communicable disease:
  - Inform the PSI Educator and/or HCO Supervisor as soon as possible.
  - When not yet in the HCO, do not come into the practice education setting.
  - When already in the HCO, leave the practice education setting as soon as possible.
  - Seek medical care as needed.
  - Do not return to the practice education setting until it is deemed safe according to the infection prevention and control precautions for that disease.

### *Health Care Organizations*

- Establish policies and procedures for identifying and responding to communicable disease outbreaks that involve practice education experiences.
- Set expectations for screening and immunization of Students and Educators based on the recommended schedule for routine vaccinations<sup>25</sup> and the recommended schedule for special populations (see [PEG Communicable Disease Prevention](#)).<sup>26</sup>
- Communicate to the PSIs:
  - the specific screening and immunization expectations
  - the outbreak protocols
- Track communicable disease outbreaks, identify trends, and share relevant information with the PSI where appropriate.
- Supply Students and on-site Educators with PPE as needed, unless demand exceeds supply in which case, work with the PSI on how best to meet the need for PPE so the practice education experience can continue.

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<sup>25</sup> BCCDC. (October 2020). *Communicable Disease Control Manual - Chapter 2: Immunization – Part 1 – Immunization Schedules*. Pg. 5-7. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from [http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%202-%20Imms/Part\\_1\\_Schedules.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%202-%20Imms/Part_1_Schedules.pdf)

<sup>26</sup> Ibid. (2018) *Chapter 2: Immunization: Part 2 – Immunization of Special Populations: Health Care Workers*. Retrieved February 16, 2019 from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/communicable-disease-control-manual/immunization/immunization-of-special-populations>

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- In the event of a communicable disease outbreak:
  - Identify a liaison to be responsible for communicating with the PSI.
  - Notify the PSIs as soon as possible, especially when the outbreak could imminently impact the practice education experience (such as start date or continuation).
  - Confirm vaccine and immunity status of Students and on-site PSI Educators.
  - Consult with the Medical Health Officer/Infection Prevention and Control Practitioner to determine if the practice education experience can continue as scheduled or needs to be suspended, delayed, extended, or changed.
  - Work with the PSI Practice Education Coordinator (or designate) to determine the best approach to fulfilling the commitment for the practice education experience, such as:
    - delaying start of the experience as scheduled
    - suspending or pausing the experience that has already started
    - adjusting the experience so it can continue in either the affected or unaffected areas, but not both, **or** either involving the affected or unaffected Clients, but not both
    - seeking alternative settings that will meet the learning needs of the practice education experience
    - extending the practice education experience beyond the original time
  - Update the PSI regularly on the status of the outbreak.
  - Only cancel the practice education experience after all other possible alternatives have been explored and discussed with senior leaders, Ministry of Health representatives, other HCOs, and the PSI.



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## References and Resources

- BC Centre for Disease Control. (May 2017). *Communicable Disease Control Manual*. Provincial Health Services Authority. Retrieved on February 16, 2019: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/communicable-disease-control-manual>
- Ibid. (October 2020) *Chapter 2: Immunization; Part 1 – Immunization Schedules*. Retrieved December 8, 2020 from [http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%202%20-%20Imms/Part\\_1\\_Schedules.pdf](http://www.bccdc.ca/resource-gallery/Documents/Guidelines%20and%20Forms/Guidelines%20and%20Manuals/Epid/CD%20Manual/Chapter%202%20-%20Imms/Part_1_Schedules.pdf)
- Ibid. (2018) *Chapter 2: Immunization; Part 2 – Immunization of Special Populations*. Retrieved February 16, 2019 from <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/communicable-disease-control-manual/immunization/immunization-of-special-populations>
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Ibid. (2009). *Controlling Exposure: Protecting Workers from Infectious Disease*. Retrieved December 28, 2020 from <https://www.worksafebc.com/en/resources/health-safety/books-guides/controlling-exposure-protecting-workers-from-infectious-disease>

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## Guideline Review History

Version	Date	People Responsible	Brief Description (reason for change)
1	September 2007	Authors/Editors: Carol A. Wilson (BCAHC), Barb Collingwood (BCAHC) Reviewers: Practice Education Committee of the BC Academic Health Council (Grace Mickelson, Chair)	
2	February 2013	Editors: Andrea Starck (NHA) Heather Straight (VCHA) Debbie McDougall (BCAHC)	Revised to new template Content aligned to related guidelines (eg: immunizations, respiratory protection, orientation) References updated ++
3	March 2021	Editor: Carol A. Wilson (PHSA) Reviewers: Judy Lee (KPU) BJ Gdanski (PHSA) Ministry of Health (Allied Health Policy Secretariat and Nursing Policy Secretariat) Ministry of Advanced Education, Skills and Training (Health Education Reference Committee) Health Authority Practice Education Committee	Update definitions and references Updated language to allow for variations in practice education experiences and types of outbreaks. Added in that the Medical Health Officer is the one who ultimately decides how the practice education experience will be impacted. Aligned with relevant guidelines (Orientation, Communicable Disease Prevention, Respiratory Fit Testing) Updated to be consistent with BC Health Authorities DRAFT Policy "Management of Occupational Exposure to Communicable Diseases" Updated to latest BCCDC policies and relevant resources from COVID-19 pandemic