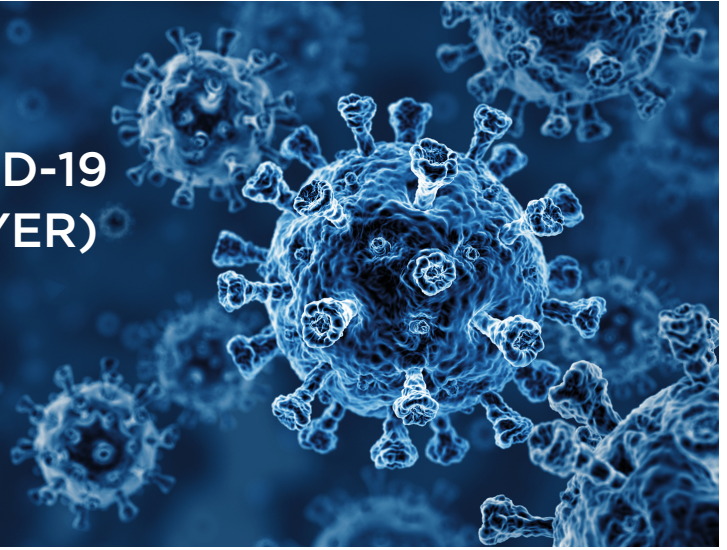




HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE DURING COVID-19 FOR COLLEGES (EMPLOYER)



OVERVIEW

During the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, we all need to do our part to keep workers, students and the public safe and healthy so we can stop the spread and prepare to reopen the province, when we are ready.

Below is a set of resources, tips and best practices to help employers and employees prevent the spread of COVID-19 and work together to reopen the province.

Employers and workers in Ontario have certain duties and rights under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) and its regulations. Employers should also review and follow any applicable directives and guidance coming from the Chief Medical Officer of Health and Ministry of Health.

You should also regularly check for requirements applicable to your region, such as:

- the provincial COVID-19 Response Framework
- municipal bylaws
- orders from your local public health unit

To help prevent outbreaks, you are encouraged to develop a COVID-19 workplace safety plan. All businesses operating in a region in lockdown are required to have one under provincial regulation.

LEARN MORE ABOUT:

- [workers' rights](#)
- [employers' responsibilities](#)



BEST PRACTICES TO KEEP YOUR WORKERS HEALTHY AND SAFE

The health and safety of workers is a top concern amid the global COVID-19 pandemic. During this time, all parties must place an increased focus on health and safety in order to protect the health and safety of workers and to keep College operations running and safe.

The first step to controlling risks in a workplace is to identify the risks. This applies to all workplace hazards, not just COVID-19. Identifying and controlling workplace hazards is required of all employers in Ontario under the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations. The key risk factors for COVID-19 transmission include:

- prolonged exposure - spending more time with potentially infected people
- close proximity - working close to others
- crowded places - having more people in a space
- closed spaces - indoor spaces with less fresh air exchange (working indoors is riskier than working outdoors)
- forceful exhalation - activities that cause people to breathe more deeply, such as exercise, speaking loudly and singing

It is possible for COVID-19 to be spread by people who do not have any symptoms. This makes effective control measures very important. We must act as if everyone is infected when setting up controls. The risk of severe health outcomes is not the same for all workers. The risk increases with age and is higher for people with certain medical conditions.

All measures taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 should be done in compliance with requirements under the OHSA and its regulations and the applicable public health directives issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

PROTECTING YOURSELF AND CO-WORKERS-GENERAL GUIDANCE

The virus typically spreads through coughing and sneezing, close contact with an infected person, or touching an infected surface and then the face – mouth, nose or eyes. Here is some general guidance and [helpful tips](#) to help prevent the spread of germs:

- Maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons, including students, visitors and co-workers. (see Physical Distancing)
- Wear a mask or face covering when in an indoor public place.
- Promote good hygiene by:



- Washing your hands often with soap and water when hands are visibly soiled, before and after any breaks, at the beginning and end of their shift, and before preparing food or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60% - 90% alcohol content, note: healthcare and allied health students or faculty on placement or in clinical settings would use at least 70%) if hand washing is not possible.
- Sneeze and cough into your sleeve.
- If you use a tissue, discard immediately and wash your hands afterward.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid high-touch areas, where possible, or ensure you clean your hands after.
- Implement regular cleaning and disinfection (see Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection)
- Minimize contact with people who are sick and ensure controls are in place for the protection of workers.
- Instruct workers to stay home if they are sick.
- Wash your clothes as soon as you get home.
- Self monitor for illness
- Instruct staff who have symptoms or think they were exposed to COVID-19, to notify their supervisor immediately, complete the [self-assessment](#) and follow the instructions provided.

ESTABLISH AN EFFECTIVE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY AND INFECTION PREVENTION AND CONTROL PLAN

All workplaces in Ontario should develop a safety plan that includes at a minimum how they will implement key health and safety measures such as screening, physical distancing, masks or face coverings, cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces and objects, and the wearing of personal protective equipment. Establish an infectious disease preparedness and response plan. The plan should follow recommendations in [guidance notes](#) from the [Ministry of Health](#) and directives from [Public Health Ontario](#). The plan should address levels of risk associated with the workplace and job tasks within Community Colleges, Residences, and Career Colleges, in job roles such as faculty, staff and support workers, and any office staff. This includes how the College will operate during and throughout the recovery phase following the pandemic including sanitization of the workplace, equipment and resources, how employees report illness, how to ensure physical distancing and how work will be scheduled.

To access the most recent Ministry of Health guidance notes please visit and scroll down to find your relevant sector information:

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/2019_guidance.aspx

A list of activities and links to relevant resources to provide support in this area are listed below:

- Workplaces shall implement this screening for any workers or essential visitors entering the work environment. Screening should occur before or when a worker enters the workplace at the beginning



of their day or shift, or when an essential visitor arrives. At a minimum, the questions outlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health should be used to screen individuals for COVID-19 before they are permitted entry into the workplace (business or organization). The tool may be adapted based on need and the specific setting.

- Every course outline should be designed with an “in case of emergency” plan, setting out how material will be delivered, how assignments and exams will change, and how communication between instructors and students will occur.
- Ensure every student living in residence knows the procedures in the event of a decision to close the facilities.
- Review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching, learning, and research, and make changes as necessary.
- Ensure continuity plans address how to temporarily postpone, limit, or adapt research-related activities (e.g., study recruitment or participation, access to labs) in a manner that protects the safety of researchers, participants, facilities, and equipment.
- Implement e-learning plans and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.
- Develop a plan for employee exposure control based on job risk assessment, including information on the type of PPE required for various job classifications (gloves, face shields, respirators, etc.) and training on same.
- Limit the number of staff who share College vehicles. If they must share a vehicle:
 - Develop protocols for staff who share College vehicles to ensure appropriate cleaning/disinfecting procedures.
 - Limit the occupancy and space riders in every other seat or in a way to create 2 metre distancing.
 - Wear face coverings.
 - When possible windows should be open.
 - If 2 metres distancing is not possible, and staff must share College vehicle, provide staff with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects the eyes, nose and mouth (surgical/procedure mask and goggles or face shield).
- Develop a contingency plan in the event of another wave of the pandemic.
- Place posters or other signage in high traffic areas:
 - Asking students, visitors and staff to stay home if they have symptoms (fever, cough or difficulty breathing)
 - Require all persons entering the workplace to wear a mask or face covering in a manner that covers their mouth, nose and chin during any period when they are in the indoor area (unless exempted).
 - All persons must use a face covering (non-medical mask, such as a cloth mask) in public indoor spaces (unless exempted).
 - Encouraging good respiratory hygiene, hand hygiene, and other healthy practices at the entrance to the workplace. Consider hand sanitizer stations at these locations where possible.
 - Utilize remote work for employees wherever and whenever possible.



- Institute measures to physically separate or impose physical distance of at least 2 metres between persons. This could be done by use of physical partitions, visual cues or signage to limit close contact.
- Provide training to workers on COVID-19, how it spreads, risk of exposure, including those who may be at higher risk (i.e. have underlying health conditions) and procedures to follow including reporting process, proper hand washing practices and other routine infection control precautions.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home, ensure that sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance. Communicate these policies to employees.
- Based on risk of exposure, consider implementing a process for containing and laundering clothing worn at work. Alternatively, advise workers to practice good laundry hygiene practices with their clothing as it could potentially be a source of contamination.
- Have a system for reporting probable and confirmed cases to the local [Public Health](#) unit. Communication about who will take responsibility, ensuring proper documentation, and implementing any advice given by the Public Health unit is critical for containing the spread of COVID-19.
- Assign staff to dedicated work areas as much as possible. Discourage them from sharing phones, desks, offices and other tools and equipment.
- Limit the exchange of papers (e.g. signing contracts). If documents must be exchanged, leave them on a clean surface while maintaining a two-metre distance. Avoid sharing pens and office equipment. Disinfect after each use.
- Schedule visits to eliminate people gathering in reception areas.

PHYSICAL DISTANCING

As advised by the [Chief Medical Officer of Health](#), public health officials, and outlined throughout government communications, physical distancing is required to control the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing means maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) or more between persons. By maintaining physical distancing, people are less likely to be exposed to a respiratory virus like COVID-19 as the virus can be spread before symptoms appear (pre-symptomatic) and when persons may have contracted the virus but are minimal or no symptoms (asymptomatic).

In order to ensure physical distancing in the workplace, employers should consider:

- Space seating/desks at least 2 meters apart when feasible.
- For lecture halls, consider taping off seats and rows to ensure six-foot distance between seats.
- Host smaller classes in larger rooms.
- Offer distance learning in addition to in-person classes to help reduce the number of in-person attendees.
- Consider hybrid virtual and in-person class structures or staggered/rotated scheduling to accommodate smaller class sizes.
- Provide adequate distance between individuals engaged in experiential learning opportunities (e.g., labs, vocational skill building activities).



- Organize small in-person classes, activities, and events so that there is 2 meters between students. This might mean rotating in-person classroom attendance.
- Limit sharing of objects or ensure they are cleaned and disinfected between users.
- Observe areas with possibility for lineups such as food service entry points, washrooms, locker rooms, offices, meeting rooms, or classrooms and remind students about physical distancing measures.
- Where feasible, install physical barriers, such as sneeze guards and partitions, particularly in areas where it is difficult for individuals to remain at least 2 meters apart (e.g., cash registers, public counters, library check out, lab benches).
- Provide visual guides, such as tape on floors or sidewalks and signs on walls to ensure that individuals remain at least 2 meters apart in lines and at other times.
- Close shared spaces such as dining halls, game rooms, exercise rooms, and lounges if possible; otherwise, stagger use and restrict the number of people allowed in at one time to ensure everyone can stay at least 2 meters apart, and clean and disinfect between use.
- Add physical barriers, such as plastic flexible screens, between bathroom sinks and between residence beds especially when they cannot be at least 6 feet apart.
- Campus orientation events in large spaces could be converted to smaller, virtual program orientations.
- Cancel or postpone events such as club meetings, performances, social events, athletic team practices, and sporting events unless 2 meters distancing can be maintained or further guidance from the government is provided.
- Design strategies to avoid food distribution in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd. Consider options such as “grab-and-go” bagged lunches or meal delivery.
- Consider if and how existing dining services should be scaled back or adapted.
- Instead of one residence move in day, stagger move in over a week to allow for physical distancing
- Convert double residence rooms to singles.
- Reduce number of students and staff using shared bathrooms.
- Consider options for limiting non-essential travel in accordance with government requirements.
- Encourage students, faculty and staff who use mass transit to consider using other transportation options (e.g., walking, biking, driving or riding by car- alone or with household members only) if feasible.
- Limit number of users that share vehicles. Limit occupancy and space riders in every other seat or in a way to create 2 metre distancing. If feasible consider vehicle partition between riders.
- Implement all measures to ensure physical distance and separation between people
- Provide workers with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) that protects the eyes, nose and mouth (surgical/procedure mask and goggles or face shield) if:
 - they are required to come within 2 metres of another person and,
 - if they not separated by plexiglass or some other impermeable barrier from a person.
- Workers must use PPE as required by their employer
- Workers should be trained on proper use, care and limitations of any required PPE
- Limiting the total number of people at the workplace and where they are assigned to work.



- Consider implementing a system for virtual and/or telephone consultations when and where possible.
- Non-essential face-to-face appointments should be postponed or converted to virtual appointments.
- Have staff work from home whenever possible (i.e. administrative staff).
- Restricting visitors and limiting workplace entry to only essential personnel.
- Suspending all group activities and gatherings.
- Alter the workplace layout of the floor by moving furniture or using visual cues such as tape on the floor to enhance physical distancing.
- Lunchrooms and break rooms must be arranged to follow physical distancing practices. Consider staggered lunch and break times to reduce the number of employees gathering.

ENVIRONMENTAL CLEANING AND DISINFECTION

While employers always have an obligation to maintain clean workplaces, that obligation is under sharper focus during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The coronaviruses can survive for several days on different surfaces and objects. Frequent cleaning and disinfection is important to prevent spread of the disease. Many common household and commercial disinfectant products will destroy the COVID-19 virus. Some disinfectants will have an eight-digit Drug Identification Number (DIN). These products are approved for use by Health Canada. Refer to the [Public Health Ontario](#) for more details.

Employers should focus on:

- Easy access to soap and water (ways to properly clean hands) or alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available
- Frequent cleaning and disinfecting of washroom facilities.
- Posting signage on hygiene in English and majority languages in the workplace so everyone can understand how to do their part respecting hygiene practices.
- Sanitizing of commonly touched surfaces or areas (e.g. door handles, light switches, toilet handles, counters, work surfaces, drinking fountain handles, dining hall tables learning and teaching aids and instruments, equipment, desks, chairs, handrails, and other hard surfaces) twice a day and when visibly soiled
- Allow adequate contact time according to the manufacturers instructions
- Determine cleaning practices or action on frequently touched and shared items that are not easily cleaned (e.g. Library books). For example: leaving item for a period of 24hours to 3 days before handling.
- Follow public health guidelines if you need to close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#).
- Increase cleaning routines for common areas.



REPORTING ILLNESS

The symptoms of COVID-19 are shared with many other illnesses including the cold and flu. At this time, it is recommended that anyone who begins to feel unwell (fever, new cough or difficulty breathing) should return home and [self-isolate](#) immediately. If you are a caregiver, have a household member, or a contact of someone who has COVID-19 you should follow the guidance from public health on [self-isolation](#).

People who are self-isolating should seek clinical assessment over the phone - either by calling their primary care provider's office or Telehealth Ontario 1-866-797-0000. If you need additional assessment, your primary care provider or Telehealth Ontario will direct you to in-person care options.

Anyone who has travelled outside of Canada must self-isolate for 14 days upon return from travel and should not go to work.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR, TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT AND WORKPLACE SAFETY & INSURANCE BOARD REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The OHSA requires an employer to provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a worker has an occupational illness (including COVID-19) from exposure in the workplace or if a claim has been made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) by or on behalf of the worker with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:

- [Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development](#);
- Joint health and safety committee (or health and safety representative); and
- Trade union, if any.

For more information:

- [Occupational Illness: Requirements to Report to the Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development](#)

Any instances of occupationally-acquired illnesses shall be reported to [WSIB](#) within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.

SHARE INFORMATION

It is important that all parties in a workplace understand their roles and responsibilities. Employers need to ensure health and safety policies are updated and posted for all employees to see. Using industry resources, including this one and those produced by [Public Services Health and Safety Association](#) (PSHSA), the Ministry of Health, and Public Health Ontario will improve workplace understanding.



POST YOUR POLICIES

All employers need to post and communicate COVID-19 policies to employees. These policies should cover how the workplace will operate, including but not limited to:

- The sanitization of workplaces
- How work will be scheduled including screening, physical distancing, the use of masks and PPE
- How workers and contractors report illnesses

All businesses should have a workplace illness policy. If a policy does not currently exist or does not align with COVID-19 recommendations, the following should be included: Sick employees must stay home or be sent home from work; For employees housed in workplace accommodations, sick employees must be confined to their rooms until cleared for re-entry into the workforce; Sick employees should use the self-assessment tool for COVID-19 and follow the subsequent directions; When employees go home sick, their work areas must be cleaned and disinfected.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR TRAINING AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT (MLTSD) REQUIREMENTS

The MLTSD is focused on providing enhanced protections for workers. Effective March 19, 2020, the Employment Standards Act was amended to provide [job protected leaves](#) for employees affected by COVID-19.

TRACK AND MONITOR YOUR WORKFORCE

Due to the latency period of COVID-19, it is important to track where workers have worked, where possible. If a worker tests positive for COVID-19, the local public health unit will ask employers to provide information on where the worker worked as well as the contact information of any other worker who may have been exposed.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOL:

<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/#qO>

TO CONTACT YOUR LOCAL PUBLIC HEALTH UNIT:

<http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/common/system/services/phu/locations.aspx>



RESOURCES

Stay updated with daily government updates:

- [Government of Ontario](#)
- [Government of Canada](#)
- [Public Health Ontario](#)

ONTARIO GOVERNMENT AND AGENCY-ISSUED RESOURCES ABOUT COVID-19

The [Ontario Ministry of Health](#) is providing consistent updates on the provincial government's response to the outbreak, including:

- status of cases in Ontario
- current affected areas
- symptoms and treatments
- how to protect yourself and self-isolate
- updated Ontario news on the virus

[Public Health Ontario](#) is providing up-to-date resources on COVID-19, including:

- links to evolving public health guidelines, position statements and situational updates
- synopsis of key articles updating on the latest findings related to the virus
- recommendations for use of personal protective equipment
- information on infection prevention and control
- testing information
- other public resources

OTHER COVID-19 RESOURCES

[Health Canada](#) outlines the actions being taken by the Government of Canada to limit spread of the virus, as well as what is happening in provinces and communities across the country. It also maintains a live update of the number of cases by province.

The [World Health Organization](#) is updating the latest guidance and information related to the global outbreak and spread beyond Canadian borders.

It also provides the most up-to-date information on:

- current research and development around the virus
- a COVID-19 situation “dashboard”
- emergency preparedness measures
- live media updates on the spread of the virus



Safe Environments
Healthy Workers

www.pshsa.ca

PUBLIC SERVICES HEALTH AND SAFETY ASSOCIATION

Access resources and information about COVID-19 at <https://www.pshsa.ca/covid-19>

EDUCATION SPECIFIC RESOURCES:

Ministry of Colleges and Universities <https://www.ontario.ca/page/ministry-colleges-universities>

MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES

- Government of Canada, COVID-19 Taking Care of Your Mental Health:
<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/taking-care-mental-health.html>

This resource does not replace the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* (OHSA) and its regulations, and should not be used as or considered legal advice. Health and safety inspectors apply the law based on the facts in the workplace.