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COVID-19 Update

February 2021

Screening, testing, masks, vaccines – the latest from the Ministry of Education

OSBCU continues to meet (virtually) with the Deputy Minister of Education every two weeks. We use these opportunities to advocate for education workers and seek clarification on issues brought to our attention by locals. During yesterday's meeting, OSBCU asked for clarification on issues related to screening, testing and masking. These are the answers provided:

- **Screening:** There are no exemptions from the single-symptom screener and direction on householder members. All asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine, without exemption, even for essential reasons, until the symptomatic individual receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional. Education workers are not to be exempted from these screening protocols.

This information was just recently clarified with school board directors throughout the province and it may take time for the message to circulate fully. If there are issues within a specific board, local presidents should let OSBCU know with details and we will raise the matter with the Ministry.

- **Access to pharmacies for asymptomatic testing:**

In discussions with the Crown and Council of Trustees' Associations (CTA), we have raised concerns about the rollout of asymptomatic testing in school boards. The CTA had cited that selected pharmacies were offering this service. Upon inspection of the website listing the pharmacies, OSBCU raised the concern that education workers were not included in the list of folks who could obtain asymptomatic tests at these locations. The government has confirmed that websites should have been updated to reflect this. Please note, only pharmacies listed are providing these tests. Your school board may also be offering testing at school sites as well. You can access a list of pharmacies in your area via <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations>.

- **Double masking:** There is no recommendation from Public Health Ontario to start double masking. As a reminder, we will add that CUPE education workers should have a well-fitting mask that covers the nose and mouth and to avoid touching and adjusting the mask.



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Also, please remember to place and remove the mask properly and wash your hands before and after you handle your mask.

- **Vaccinations:** The government has confirmed that vaccinations for education workers will begin to roll out soon. It further clarified that priority will be giving to all adults working in schools.

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