



Nova Scotia Teachers Union

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TO: NSTU Members

FROM: Staff

DATE: January 18, 2022

RE: Covid Update and Resources

A number of questions and concerns have arisen in recent days around the Covid situation with the return to in-person learning this week. Below please find some reminders, clarifications and links to resources. We encourage you to contact the NSTU Staff Officer assigned to your region for individual support (1-800-565-6788 and see nstu.ca Covid page for Covid FAQs and staff email addresses).

Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Right to Refuse

We recently circulated three documents to support members in exercising their right to refuse dangerous work (see nstu.ca Covid page under OHS). Some members have described being dissuaded from exercising these rights or feeling threatened with discipline or reprisals. All teachers, regardless of contract status, have the right to refuse dangerous work and to insist on a safe workplace. Teachers cannot be disciplined or punished for exercising their OHS rights.

If you have Symptoms or are Unwell

Teachers are reporting that they feel discouraged from calling in sick, and feel pressure to go to work ill because of the burden their absence will place on coworkers. A reminder that if you are ill, you should call in sick and stay home. This applies of course to Covid symptoms but also to other physical and mental health conditions that prevent you from being able to work. You cannot look after your students and family, if you don't look after yourself.

Close Contacts

For close contacts of a Covid case there are currently two distinct sets of directions from Public Health regarding whether to isolate and if so, for how long. If the positive case is within your household and you cannot isolate from them (eg. a young child, a shared bathroom), you cannot go to work and must isolate until the Covid positive person has recovered.

www.nshealth.ca/household-close-contact. Article 31.03(i) quarantine leave ordinarily provides paid leave during this period.

If you Have Covid you are Permitted to tell your Close Contacts

While the EECD Fact Sheet provided last week says "Staff are not required to identify and notify individuals they were in contact with at school...", we have confirmed with EECD that this is not a prohibition on notifying your school-related close contacts or a "gag order". In other words, a teacher is free to inform students, their families and colleagues if the teacher has Covid. (The NSTU believes that students and staff are in fact required to notify their close school-related contacts and we continue to lobby EECD to make this direction to the system.)

If you have Covid you must Isolate

Reminder that Public Health requires someone with a positive Covid test to isolate until, at the very earliest, day 8 after the positive test www.nshealth.ca/testedpositiveforcovid. (We have received reports that some staff have mistakenly been told they can attend work with asymptomatic Covid.)

Covering Classes During your Marking and Preparation Time

Many schools have told teachers to expect that they will be required to cover other classes during their scheduled marking and preparation time. This is permissible where the school has made all reasonable efforts to hire a substitute and no substitute is available. When this occurs, the teacher who lost marking and preparation time is entitled to have that time returned to them within 10 school days (Teachers' Provincial Agreement articles 32.23 and 59.05). You are encouraged to keep a record of the marking and preparation time that must be returned to you and to remind your administrator as required. If the time is not returned to you, a grievance is available.

If you have questions or require support regarding any of these (or other) matters, please contact the NSTU Staff Officer assigned to your region.