



## **NIPISSING DISTRICT COVID-19 PROTOCOL FOR REGIONAL AND PROVINCIAL EVENTS**

November 2021

### **INTRODUCTION**

The four local school boards (Conseil scolaire catholique Franco-Nord, Conseil scolaire publique du Nord-Est, Near North District School Board and Nipissing Parry Sound Catholic District School Board) and the North Bay and Parry Sound District Health Unit recognize the importance of extracurricular activities, interregional and provincial events in supporting students' mental health, well-being, and academic development.

After a long absence due to the precarious health situation in Ontario, the Nipissing and Parry Sound region is happy to be able to host teams from other areas of the province to participate in secondary school events following all health and safety protocols.

To ensure the safety of all, the four school boards and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, have adopted this protocol to guide the planning of all regional and provincial sporting events in the Nipissing and Parry Sound District. This protocol contains public health guidelines and measures that must be followed. It should be noted that all school events in the region and/or the participation of teams attending from identified regions are subject to cancellation or may be suspended in order to comply with any local public health recommendations and/or Ontario government directives or at the discretion of the school boards and the Health Unit.

All decisions of the school boards and local public health officials are based on the health and safety of students, staff, supervisors, and service providers.

### **PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES**

The public health guidelines announced by the Government of Ontario and those announced by the Public Health Unit must be followed at all times, regardless of the activity.

#### **Facial Coverings**

Staff and students must wear masks throughout the duration of the exercise when indoors except in instances indicated in government guidelines. Masks must be worn during all activities except when it is unsafe to do so. Staff and students are not required to wear masks outdoors unless they cannot maintain physical distance.

Staff and other activity leaders must wear medical grade masks whenever a mask is required. Coaches, team officials, and activity leaders will wear eye protection if they are within 2m of an unmasked participant. Masks and eye protection will be provided by the school.

When outdoors, coaches, team officials and activity leaders are obligated to wear a medical mask if they are within 2m of their student participants. Masks can easily be put on as they move in/out of a person's 2m bubble. *Note: While risk of transmission is lower outdoors, the risk is not eliminated and wearing a mask reduces chances of being a high-risk contact.*

### **Physical Distancing**

It is important to always promote the greatest possible distancing between students, between students and staff, and between staff members. Indeed, a physical distancing of two meters (2m) must be maintained between students and staff inside and outside the school whenever possible. Physical distancing must be maintained indoors when students are required to remove their masks to complete the activity. For example, during a physical activity where wearing a mask is not safe or when delivering dialogue in a play.

When entering and exiting activity areas and while performing the activity:

- Physical distancing measures should be layered with other public health measures such as screening, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, enhanced cleaning, and mask wearing.
- Student travel times should be staggered, if possible, to limit student congregation (e.g., transition to the gym, transition between periods).

Students should be informed that they should not socialize or congregate before or after an interscholastic sports activity.

Hand shaking between teams at the end of a sports activity is not permitted at this time.

### **Hand Cleaning and Disinfection**

Staff and students must wash or sanitize their hands at the beginning of the activity, before and after breaks, and at the end of the activity. This should also be done before using shared objects.

### **Implementation of safety measures for the safety of participants**

The school should ensure that appropriate signage is posted in locker rooms and activity areas as a reminder to participants of the need to follow public health guidelines (mask wearing, hand hygiene, physical distancing...).

Adherence to a single public health measure will not prevent transmission in schools. Rather, a combination of structural and individual elements, with the collaboration and support of activity leaders, will help to enhance health security at activities and reduce the risk of infection among those on site. The implementation of preventive measures must be a priority.

## Verification of self-screening

All participants and activity leaders, including Board personnel and community/parent volunteers must successfully complete the COVID-19 self-assessment and be symptom free prior to attending regional and provincial events being held in school or community facilities. Screening will be confirmed upon arrival and will be noted on the attendance log by the activity leader. Proof of vaccination will not be required for 12+ participants at school site venues. However, if a community space is being used for any games, the regulations of that space must be followed.

All game officials and student volunteers (score keepers, gatekeepers...) will successfully complete the COVID-19 self-assessment and be symptom free prior to attending any inter-school athletic events. Screening will be confirmed upon arrival and documented. Adults supporting regional or provincial events are required by their respective boards to provide proof of vaccine or rapid antigen test 3x a week and report to their board/school.

All student participants, team officials, club leaders, game officials and student volunteers must follow direction provided after completing the COVID-19 self-assessment.

Student participants and activity leaders will immediately notify the Head Coach or the lead teacher responsible for the activity/team/club if COVID-19 symptoms arise during an activity.

Any student or staff participant who does not comply with current and updated guidelines will be subject to exclusion from the event.

## Protocol Review and Expectations

Activity leaders must review with the participants the health and safety measures to be followed when participating in the event.

All current guidelines must be shared with all student participants, team officials, games officials and parents/guardians prior to the commencement of an activities season. Updates will be shared as needed.

## PERMITTED ACTIVITIES

Definition of Activity Types:

- **High contact** activities/sports are defined as those activities/sports where physical contact and/or close proximity is required between individuals.
- **Low contact** activities/sports are those that involve intermittent proximity or limited, incidental physical contact between participants and allow for physical distancing most of the time.

**Elementary (K-6):** Since students are not yet immunized, only low-contact activities and those that allow for safe masking are allowed.

**Secondary (7-12):** All extracurricular activities and sports are permitted as long as the health and safety measures of the government, the provincial Chief Medical Officer of Health and the Health Unit can be met.

Please see the following OPHEA document for examples of how to apply these elements in an analysis: [Considerations when Selecting Interschool Athletic Activities](#).

In all cases, the hosting of all regional and/or provincial events must be approved by the hosting school board before the start of any planning.

## EQUIPMENT

The use of common equipment is allowed. The risk associated with transmission through shared items is low. Regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be reinforced to reduce the risk of infection from shared equipment, especially when it is not possible to clean shared items regularly.

Equipment in use should be cleaned and disinfected after each game. Please refer to the provincial measures document and the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit's [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#).

Each student is encouraged to bring their own labelled **water bottle**, keep it with them during the day and not share it.

## FACILITIES

The following public health measures must be implemented to ensure safe use of the facility with the presence of different cohorts and guests from other schools.

In the case of athletic games, the host school must communicate to the coaches of the other teams the procedures for entry and exit of visiting students in order to manage traffic flow and minimize contact within the school. Coaches of these teams must ensure that their students follow the procedures established by the host school.

A designated space (e.g., isolation room or outdoor space) will be set-up to ensure any student or adult who develops symptoms during any team or club related activity is separated from all other attendees, so that they are isolated before they leave and seek testing.

### Change rooms

When different cohorts interact in shared indoor spaces, masks should be worn and as much distance as possible maintained between cohorts.

Strategies that can be used include, but are not limited to:

- Where possible, having student participants arrive dressed and ready to start.
- Scheduling students to limit the number of people in the change room and shower at any one time.
- Ensuring physical distancing for those using the change room and/or shower.
- Ensuring all students wear a mask when using the change room.
- Blocking off areas in locker rooms, posting signs that remind participants to maintain distance.
- Ensuring there is time between games to allow for cleaning of high touch surfaces prior to another team utilizing the space.

All teams participating in the event can only be present in the facility when scheduled to play or just prior to their scheduled game. An area must be designated for teams waiting to access the change room.

It is important that change rooms that have been used are cleaned and disinfected, including high contact surfaces, after each use.

## Gymnasium

When more than one game is being played in the same day at one site, each school site or facility (e.g., Turf Field) will develop entrance and exit plans for their facilities to minimize contact between the outgoing and incoming teams.

## HIGH CONTACT SURFACES

High-touch surfaces are surfaces that are touched by many people throughout the day (e.g., benches, gym mats, light switches, etc.).

- Emphasis should be placed on regular hand hygiene to reduce the risk of infection from high touch surfaces.
- When high touch surfaces are used, it is suggested that they be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day, but more frequent cleaning may be necessary depending on the frequency of use and the extent of soiling.

## VISITING TEAMS OR CLUBS

All visiting teams or clubs must comply with local and provincial public health guidelines. Participants with COVID-19 symptoms may not enter any school or municipal facilities being used for the event. All participants will be required to register before attending the event.

The provincial *Plan to Safely Reopen Ontario* requires local public health to monitor trends and to put in place additional protections as warranted. Based on local experience and data, the Medical Officer of Health for the North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit, has the statutory powers under the Health Protection and Promotion Act, which he may use to address outbreaks or risks of COVID-19 transmission in schools.

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit and the local school boards, when considering local, regional and provincial public health COVID-19 data and indicators, may require the following:

1. The postponement of the event; or
2. The cancellation of the event; or
3. The exclusion of teams from designated areas of the province.

The Health Unit and the four local school boards may exclude teams from any regions that have been required to execute a *circuit-breaker* or to reinstate provincial public health restrictions to interrupt an increase of transmission of COVID-19 within their community. The decision to exclude teams from an event is not taken lightly but is required to protect the participants at the event, the local school population and the Nipissing and Parry Sound communities.

## VACCINATION DISCLOSURE

All game officials, activity leaders, coaches and volunteers are subject to the local and provincial vaccination disclosure policy. They will be required to:

- Provide proof of full vaccination against COVID-19; and
- Provide identification.

## SPECTATORS/AUDIENCE

In order to ensure the continued focus on required health and safety protocols, mitigation of risks, supporting our students' participation, and in compliance with the OFSAA protocols or Fall 2021, spectators are not permitted at regional and provincial events.

## MOVEMENT OF STUDENTS

### Moving students to and from physical activity areas

Activity leaders, in consultation with the principal, should develop procedures for the arrival and departure of their participants that promote physical distancing whenever possible.

To get to and from the activity area (e.g., gym, weight room, outfield):

- Create designated routes for students to get to and from the activity/sport.
- Provide visual cues or physical guides, such as tape on the floor or sidewalks and signs/posters on the walls.
- Hand sanitizer should be available at school entrances and exits and in rooms used for activities (including gyms, weight rooms, auditorium, music room).

Students in grades 1-12 are required to wear non-medical masks or properly fitting cloth masks inside the school, including in the hallways (e.g., on the way to the activity area, inside the locker rooms) and on school buses or vehicles (e.g., to and from off-site facilities).

Students with sensory or respiratory difficulties may be exempted by the school principal in accordance with school board policies.

Kindergarten students are encouraged to wear non-medical or cloth masks in indoor spaces, but this is not required.

## ATHLETIC, SPORT ACTIVITIES

### Indoor and outdoor activities

High contact and low contact activities are allowed indoors and outdoors as follows:

#### Outdoor:

- Masks are not required to be worn for outdoor high and low contact activities/sports.

### Indoors:

- Masks are encouraged for indoor (low or high contact) activities/sports when they can be worn safely depending on the activity.
- Consider the following when determining if a mask can be "worn safely based on the activity":
  - Potential physical hazards (e.g., getting caught in equipment, becoming a choking hazard, impairing vision, causing breathing difficulties).
  - Mask effectiveness (e.g., change masks if they are wet or saturated with sweat).

## **The Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education (OPASSE)**

The implementation and practice of sport activities must be done in strict accordance with OPHEA's Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education and recommendations. Please refer to the following documents for the most recent guidelines and recommendations:

- [COVID-19: Health, safety and operational guidance for schools \(2021-2022\)](#) - MOE
- [Ontario Physical Activity Safety Standards in Education \(OPASSE\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Physical Activity](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Curricular Activities \(Health and Physical Education\)](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Intramural Activities](#)
- [COVID-19 Considerations for Interscholar Athletic Activities](#)

## **ARTISTIC ACTIVITIES**

### **Music**

Music programs are permitted in areas that are well ventilated. Singing and the use of wind instruments will be permitted:

- The use of wind instruments is permitted indoors, within a cohort, if a minimum distance of at least two meters can be maintained. Maintaining as great a distance as possible should be encouraged and the use of large, well-ventilated rooms is preferred.
- The use of wind instruments is permitted outdoors in mixed cohorts, encouraging the maintenance of physical distance.
- Singing is permitted indoors. Masks are encouraged but are not required for indoor singing if a minimum distance of two meters can be maintained between cohorts and as much distance as possible can be maintained within the cohort.

If shared, wind instruments should be thoroughly disinfected between uses.

Artists should not share a microphone. The microphone must be disinfected before another artist can use it.

### **Theater**

Theater programs are permitted. Participants must wear their masks and maintain a physical distance of 2M between them. When performers are on stage and delivering dialog, they can remove their mask, unless physical distancing cannot be maintained.

## **MANAGEMENT OF POSITIVE CASES**

The North Bay Parry Sound District Health Unit will manage the reporting of a positive case in a school in accordance with the protocol established between the Public Health Unit and the school board and in accordance with the Ontario Government's guidelines.

A student, staff member, coach or volunteer who is unable to attend school as a result of an order or directive from the Public Health Unit is not permitted to participate in any school activity.