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Keeping safe in the pandemic

Steering Committee works with BCCDC to revise guidelines

Throughout the pandemic, the BCCDC and Provincial Health Officer have reiterated that transmission rates of COVID-19 in schools is low. Two recent research papers – from [the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control](#) and [the National Collaborating Centre for Methods and Tools](#) at McMaster University – appear to support this position, as does data released by [Vancouver Coastal Health](#) for the first half of the 2020/21 school year.

While this news is welcome and can provide some peace of mind, the fear and anxiety of exposure to COVID-19 and bringing the virus home to your families is real and understandable. The best way to keep K-12 members, their families, students, parents and co-workers safe is to:

- 1** Enforce robust COVID safety plans, including: maintaining physical distancing; wearing a mask if unable to physically distance; frequently washing hands; and staying home if not feeling well.
- 2** Become active participants in your workplace and/or regional Joint Health and Safety Committee(s),
- 3** Push for school districts to support effective isolation and quarantine, by providing paid general leave during these periods, and
- 4** Advocate for improved transparency and timelines of exposure reporting.

The K-12 Presidents Council, CUPE K-12 locals, CUPE National and CUPE BC continue to take these priorities on, and will continue to regularly report out to members as new information becomes available.

The BCCDC will be issuing revised guidance for the K-12 sector over the next couple of weeks. These revisions are not meant to be changes to protocol, but instead are meant to provide specific and additional clarity.

We know that the current safety measures, when used together, keep schools as safe as possible.

Guidance has been intentionally broad to allow each district to specifically apply it. However, we know that this has not been the case in many districts and the lack of detailed guidance creates deficiencies in the safety plans.

The Steering Committee has been working closely with BCCDC to adapt this guidance to be much more specific and address more areas of concern.