



OFFICE OF THE CHIEF PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICER

## Backgrounder – Frequently Asked Question

### What has changed regarding who is considered a contact at N.J. Macpherson School?

Initially, staff and students diagnosed with COVID-19 in the N.J. Macpherson outbreak were in a small number of classes. By the evening of May 2, 2021, however, many classes involving many different grades had staff or students with confirmed or probable COVID-19 infections. Based on the range of grades involved, the Office of the Chief Public Health Officer (OCPHO) has determined significant transmission in the school. ***At this time, it is prudent to classify all staff and students as close contacts.***

For the particular exposure notification at N.J. Macpherson School during the exposure period of April 26-30, all individuals at the school on those days must stay home and self-isolate for 14 days as of May 1, 2021.

### Are these rules the same for other public health exposures?

Each public exposure may have a different risk though. There are new exposure notifications and required actions if you or any of your household members were at the following locations during the following times.

Exposure location	Date and times	Required actions
Birthday Party At Multiplex DND gym	May 1, 2021 between 1 and 3 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Isolate immediately as a contact of COVID-19</li><li>Contact Public Health to disclose you attended a birthday party with an exposure</li></ul>
School bus exposure (Route 2)	April 26-29 2021 (Inclusive) Morning and/or Afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Isolate immediately as a contact of COVID-19</li></ul>
School bus exposure (Route 12)	April 29 and 30, 2021 Morning and/or afternoon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Isolate immediately as a contact of COVID-19</li></ul>
Sushi North	April 30, 2021 6 - 6:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individuals who were at this location should self-monitor and are not required to self isolate</li></ul>
Walmart	May 1, 2021 12-12:30 pm	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Individuals who where at this location should self-monitor and are not required to self isolate</li></ul>



Please also note that as the situation changes, Yellowknife Public Health may continue to notify contacts as they are identified. Household guidance may change based on new information.

### **What if I am a healthcare worker?**

If you are an essential worker; are fully vaccinated (two weeks after your second dose of the COVID-19 vaccine); and, a household member of staff, students, or volunteers of N.J. Macpherson School you may be able to go to work. You must review your circumstances with your employer and/or apply to ProtectNWT for permission to return to work. If granted, you will be required to isolate outside of work. And, this only applies while you don't have symptoms and neither does anyone else in your household.

### **What if I have shared custody of a child who is identified as a contact of the COVID-19 outbreak at N.J. Macpherson school. Do both households need to isolate, or only the household where the child is currently staying?**

If a student leaves one household to stay at another for the remainder of their isolation, there may be an opportunity to prevent the full 14 days isolation of the household the student left. This is so long as the student can have appropriate follow-up and testing. Public health will provide specific information for each situation.

If a student has been staying at both residences and attended the school during the exposure period of April 26-30, then all household members must isolate for 14 days until public health can complete its investigation and determine the extent of exposure.

### **Are there any extra precautions that parents or others should be taking for schools that are closed and not experiencing an outbreak?**

They should follow these routine public health measures:

- Routine public health measures include:
- Prioritize physical distancing of at least six feet (two metres).
- Wear non-medical masks in all public places
- If you're feeling even a little sick, stay home
- Wash your hands frequently
- Keep coughs and sneezes to yourself
- Indoor household gatherings must be limited to no more than the five regular visitors to a maximum of 10 people in the household at any given time.
- Keep gatherings small.
- Arrange to get tested and notify health centre or public health unit at the first sign of any sickness of COVID-19



In addition to routine measures, we ask that these parents who can safely go to work also take a few extra precautions (when they are not at work).

- Stay home as much as possible, including for meals and entertainment
- Shop or take public transportation during off-peak hours
- Wherever possible, use technology to keep in touch with friends and family
- Wherever possible, use food delivery services or online shopping
- Wherever possible, exercise at home or outside away from others
- Travel to airports in a private vehicle whenever possible rather than public transportation
- Avoid spending unnecessary time at public access points, including delivery locations or cafeterias
- Avoid using crowded rest stops or stores

### **Do early learning and child care programs – such as daycares – need to close down now too?**

The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) is recommending early learning and child care programs in the NWT stay open during the COVID-19 public health emergency whenever possible.

Child care is considered an essential service. The continued availability of licensed early learning and child care programs is critical to support essential workers in the NWT to provide services to residents of the NWT throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, including healthcare services.

However, some licensed day homes have been impacted by the N.J. Macpherson School outbreak and will be closed until further notice. Parents are asked to please contact their day home provider for more information on whether their child/children's day home provider has been impacted.

YWCA after school program and Montessori (CASA and after school) located at N.J. MacPherson are closed as per OCPHO direction.

### **The OCPHO is suspending all organized child and youth extra-curricular activities for those under 18 until further notice due to the outbreak declared at N.J. Macpherson school in Yellowknife. What activities does this include?**

Child and youth activities refer to extra-curricular activities that are organized through schools or other community groups that have regularly scheduled meeting times. The OCPHO also advises against more spontaneous group gatherings for children and youth under age 18 at this time. This refers to Yellowknife only. This does not include daycare and day homes for anyone NOT required to self-isolate.



**I am travelling to Yellowknife for a medical appointment during the May 1-May 14 time period - should I cancel it because of this outbreak?**

No one should cancel any necessary medical appointments in Yellowknife right now. It is still safe to travel to Yellowknife for these medical appointments. Medical facilities have robust safety processes in place to reduce the risk of getting COVID-19. Anyone who travels to Yellowknife should be able to safely return to their homes in other communities by following public health guidance:

- Prioritize physical distancing of at least six feet (two metres)
- Wear non-medical masks in all public places
- Wash your hands frequently
- Keep coughs and sneezes to yourself

**Would any students in contact with N.J. Macpherson students via bus rides to and from school need to isolate?**

Public health teams are contacting individuals identified as contacts directly. If a student has been named as a contact, they must self-isolate. The Public Health Advisory of May 2, 2021 identifies bus numbers that transported children with COVID-19. If your child was on the affected buses they are contacts and you should notify Yellowknife Public Health to arrange testing. The OCPHO is working closely with school administrators and Yellowknife Public Health staff to ensure that the appropriate public health response is in effect.