



Procedure

Management of contagious conditions

Version effective: 20/03/2020
Version: 6.2

Audience

All state schools

Purpose

This procedure outlines the responsibilities for the management of contagious conditions in schools, as prescribed in the [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#) (the Act) and the [Public Health Regulation 2018 \(Qld\)](#) (the Regulation).

Overview

Chapter 5 of the Act aims to protect children by helping to control the spread of contagious conditions in schools.

The responsibilities and processes outlined below apply only to the contagious conditions prescribed under the [Act](#). The list of contagious conditions (Schedule 4, Part 2 of the Regulation) may change from time to time and it is important to consult with the closest [Public Health Unit](#) (PHU) within Queensland Health if concerns are raised by the school community.

If a suspected outbreak of a contagious condition takes place within a school, it is vital that the principal and school staff take steps to protect the health of the school community in a timely manner.

A period of removal from school could apply to either the person with the medical condition and/or a person exposed to someone with the medical condition. Detailed requirements for each contagious condition are specified at Schedule 4, Part 2 and Part 3 of the [Regulation](#), and schools should refer to Queensland Health's [Time Out](#) poster. This poster specifies minimum periods of removal from school for some medical conditions including, but not limited to, contagious conditions as defined in this procedure.

The Public Health Medical Officer (PHMO) may consult the principal to arrange for a medical practitioner to examine some or all of the children attending the school because a child attending the school has, or may have, a contagious condition.

Under Chapter 5, s.181 of the Act, the Minister for Health, in consultation with the Minister for Education, can order the closure of a school for up to one month if the Minister for Health is satisfied that:

- there is an outbreak of a contagious condition at a school or in the community that puts the staff and students at significant risk; and
- methods of controlling the outbreak will not be effective without temporarily closing the school.



Responsibilities

Regional Directors

- Facilitate contact between the PHU and principals or regional contact officer out-of-school/office hours or for incidents requiring regional office assistance.

Principal

- Facilitate the management of contagious conditions within a school in accordance with the requirements of the [Act](#) and the [Regulation](#).
- Comply with directions given by the PHU including those about student attendance, information sharing and other actions to control contagious conditions (e.g. the temporary closure of a school).

Staff

- Ensure compliance with school processes that meet the requirements of this procedure.

Public Health Medical Officer

- Refer to [Responsibilities of the Public Health Medical Officer](#).

Process

Regional Directors

- Provide emergency contact information for principals and regional contact officers when requested by a PHU.
- Provide the PHU with emergency contacts for relevant school staff and student contact information if requested to fulfil disclosure of information obligations under the Act.
- Communicate requirements as requested by the PHU to the principal of the school where a student/staff member has been diagnosed with a contagious condition to fulfil public health obligations under the Act.
- Ensure regional personnel use the Department's records management system to keep a record of all actions taken and all student information disclosed to the PHU.

Principals

- Refer to [Steps for the management of contagious conditions](#) for an overview of the processes under this procedure.
- Implement local infection control practices outlined in the [Infection control](#) procedure.

When a student is suspected of having a contagious condition

- If there is a reasonable suspicion that a student attending the school may have a contagious condition and other students may be at risk of contracting the condition:
 - advise the parent/carer of the student with the suspected contagious condition to seek medical advice to either confirm the condition or provide medical certification that the student does not have the contagious condition



- contact the local PHU for general advice on the contagious condition and strategies to manage the condition (e.g. communication to school community)
 - notify the parent/carer in writing (unless not practicable to do so) of their legal obligation under s.161 (1)(a) and (2) of the Act to observe the prescribed period of removal from school
 - seek advice, under s.164(3) of the Act, from the PHU to determine if the parent/carer should be directed to remove the student from school and not send them to school during the prescribed period, if the student continues to attend the school or the parent/carer advises that they intend to send the student to school
 - use the [Direction to parent/carer not to send child to school letter](#) to direct the parent/carer to remove the student from school and not to send the student to school during the prescribed period, in accordance with s.164(2)(a) and (b) of the Act, if advised by the PHMO or another person authorised by Queensland Health
 - take reasonable steps to allow the student subject to a direction to not attend school to access an educational program for the period of removal
 - keep written records of all advice given and received regarding the contagious condition and the prescribed period of removal from school using the school's record-keeping processes.
2. Refer to the [Exemptions for compulsory schooling and compulsory participation](#) procedure for information about exemptions when a student is subject to a direction to not attend school.
 3. Allow a student suspected of having a contagious condition to return to school if the student has a medical practitioner's certificate stating that:
 - the student does not have the condition; or
 - the prescribed period for the condition specified at Schedule 4, Part 2 of the Regulation has ended.

Actions for at-risk unvaccinated students

4. If there is a reasonable suspicion that students attending the school have not been vaccinated for a vaccine-preventable condition and may be at-risk of contracting the condition if they continue to attend school:
 - contact the PHU
 - advise the parents/carers of unvaccinated students of the suspicion of risk
 - follow the advice of the PHU to manage the risks associated with the vaccine-preventable condition.

Additional actions to support students suspected of not being vaccinated for measles

5. If there is a reasonable suspicion that a student attending the school may have measles, follow the actions above for when a student is suspected of having a contagious condition and, in addition:
 - if requested, provide the PHU with a list of students enrolled at the school who have been in contact with the student suspected of having measles, to assist them identify which students are suspected of not being vaccinated
 - if the PHU has identified students suspected of not being vaccinated, advise the unvaccinated students' parents/carers of this suspicion (s.165(2) of the Act)
 - if the unvaccinated student continues to attend the school or the parent/carer advises that they still intend to send the student to school, seek advice under s.166(3) of the



Act from the PHU to determine if the student needs to be removed from the school setting for their own health and safety (s.166(3) of the Act)

- if advised by the PHMO or another person authorised by Queensland Health, use the [Direction to parent/carer of unvaccinated child letter](#) to direct the parent/carer to remove the student from school and not to send the student to school during the prescribed period, in accordance with s.166 (2)(a) and (b) of the Act
 - take reasonable steps to allow the student who is subject to a direction to not attend school to access an educational program for the period of removal
 - keep a record of all student information disclosed to the PHU using the school's record-keeping processes, e.g. under a record of contact in OneSchool.
6. Refer to the [Exemptions for compulsory schooling and compulsory participation](#) procedure for information about exemptions when a student is subject to a direction to not attend school.
 7. Allow a student suspected of not being vaccinated to return to school:
 - if satisfied on reasonable grounds that the student is no longer at risk of contracting the condition; or
 - when the period end requirements have been met for the contagious condition specified at Schedule 4, Part 3 of the Regulation; or
 - at the direction of the PHMO.

Disclosure of information to Queensland Health

The [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#) allows information to be shared with another party (e.g. Queensland Health), when required to do so by another Act (e.g. the *Public Health Act 2005 (Qld)*).

1. If requested, provide the PHMO with the following information:
 - the amount of contact a particular student suspected of having a contagious condition has had with other students at the school
 - names, places, dates of birth and home addresses of all students who have, or may have had contact with the student who is suspected of having the contagious condition
 - contact details of at least one parent/carer for each student to enable the PHU to confirm the vaccination status of the student and/or to provide public health advice.
2. Maintain a record of all student information disclosed to the PHU using the school's record-keeping system.

Enabling a medical examination of students to be conducted at school

1. Allow the PHMO to conduct medical examinations at the school when:
 - appropriate details have been provided by the PHMO to the school and to the parents/carers
 - parent/carer consent has been obtained by the PHU.
2. Refer to the [Responsibilities of the Public Health Medical Officer](#) for advice regarding the processes the PHMO may follow to manage a contagious condition in the school setting.

Specific actions for temporary school closure

1. Comply with all written notices made by the Minister for Health, in consultation with the Minister for Education, to close the school in the interests of public health.



Staff

1. Refer to [communicable diseases fact sheets](#) for symptoms of contagious conditions.
2. Advise the principal if it is known, or reasonably suspected, that a student may have a contagious condition.
3. Preserve privacy and confidentiality of information and documentation about a student and his/her family regarding suspected/confirmed contagious conditions.
4. Communicate, promote and follow standard infection control practices.
5. Refer to [time out](#) poster for periods of removal from school for students with contagious conditions and persons exposed to the student with the contagious condition.
6. Refer to the [Roll marking in state schools](#) procedure for detail about absence codes while a student is subject to a direction to not attend school.
7. Do not attend the workplace if you know or reasonably suspect that you may have a contagious condition and follow advice as per the [Infection control](#) procedure.
8. Refer to [Queensland Health contagious conditions fact sheet](#) and [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\) fact sheet](#) for further information about the legal framework for contagious conditions.

Definitions

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| Direction | A written or verbal instruction given by a person who is recognised under the <i>Public Health Act 2005 (Qld)</i> as a person with authority to provide the direction (e.g. a Queensland Health Public Health Medical Officer). |
| Contagious condition | A medical condition that has been prescribed under the Public Health Regulation 2018 (Qld) , Schedule 4, Part 2 because it is considered to be a serious condition that may put the community at some risk. The contagious conditions within the Regulation are – coronavirus (COVID-19), diphtheria, enterovirus 71 neurological disease, gastroenteritis, haemophilus influenza type b (invasive), hepatitis A, human influenza with pandemic potential, measles, meningococcal infection (invasive), paratyphoid, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis infection, rubella, tuberculosis, typhoid, varicella – zoster virus infection (chickenpox). |
| Medical practitioner | A doctor registered with the Medical Board of Australia through the Register of Practitioners, Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) . |
| Prescribed period | For the purposes of this procedure, a prescribed period is the period of removal from school prescribed under Schedule 4, Part 2 of the Regulation for students suspected of having a contagious condition or under Schedule 4, Part 3 of the Regulation for unvaccinated students at risk because they may be in contact with a student with a vaccine-preventable condition. |
| Public Health Medical Officer (PHMO) | For the purpose of this procedure, a PHMO is a medical practitioner working in a Public Health Unit or the Communicable Diseases Unit who has delegated authority from the chief executive, Queensland Health, to discharge duties of the Public Health Act 2005 (Qld) related to this procedure. This includes Public Health Physicians, |



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| | Public Health Registrars and other registered medical practitioners holding delegated authority from the chief executive. |
| Public Health Units (PHUs) within Queensland Health | PHUs focus on protecting health; preventing disease and outbreaks, illness and injury; and promoting health and wellbeing at a population or whole of community level. They are located within various Hospital and Health Services across Queensland. Key activities for Public Health Units include: disease control, environmental health, public health programs, and immunisation and vaccination programs. |
| Regional contact officer | For the purpose of this procedure, a regional contact officer is a regional office staff member, determined by the Regional Director, who may be contacted out of office hours to assist the PHMO with urgent public health communications to the principals of affected schools to fulfil public health obligations under the Public Health Act 2005 (Qld) . |
| Vaccine-preventable condition | <p>A condition identified in the Public Health Regulation 2018 (Qld), Schedule 5. The vaccine-preventable conditions within the Regulation are – diphtheria, haemophilus influenza type b (invasive) disease, hepatitis B, measles, meningococcal C, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis infection, pneumococcal disease (invasive), rotavirus infection, rubella, tetanus, varicella-zoster virus infection (chickenpox).</p> <p>Measles is the only vaccine-preventable contagious condition that has a prescribed period of removal from school for both a student suspected of having the condition and a student suspected of not being vaccinated.</p> |

Legislation

- [Education \(General Provisions\) Act 2006 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\)](#) Chapter 5, Part 2
- [Public Health Regulation 2018 \(Qld\)](#) Schedule 4 and Schedule 5
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011 \(Qld\)](#)
- [Information Privacy Act 2009 \(Qld\)](#)

Delegations/Authorisations

- Nil

Related policies

- Nil

Related procedures

- [Exemptions from compulsory schooling and compulsory participation](#)
- [Infection control](#)



- [Information asset and record keeping](#)
- [Roll marking in state schools](#)

Guidelines

- [Infection Control Guideline](#)

Supporting information/websites

- [Letter F1 – Principal's Direction to parent/carer not to send child to school](#)
- [Letter NV1 – Principal's Direction to parent/carer of unvaccinated child](#)
- [Steps for the management of contagious conditions](#)
- [The Public Health Medical Officer and managing contagious conditions in schools](#)

Queensland Health Factsheets

- [Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\) Contagious Conditions Factsheet for Schools and Education and Care Services](#)
- [Information for Schools, Education and Care Services and Child Care Services Contagious Conditions – Public Health Act 2005 \(Qld\), Chapter 5, Part 2](#)
- [Communicable disease factsheets](#)
- [Time out poster](#)

Contact

For further information, please contact your closest [regional office](#).

Review date

15/01/2020

Superseded versions

Previous seven years shown. Minor version updates not included

- 4.0 Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions
- 5.0 Management of Prescribed Contagious Conditions
- 6.0 Management of contagious conditions

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