
HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION**POLICY HANDBOOK**

Policy Code:	HNJ
Policy Title:	Health Emergencies
Cross Reference:	EBCD, JD
Legal Reference:	Emergency Management Act, Emergency Medical Aid Act Health Information Act Occupational Health and Safety Act Public Health Act Communicable Disease Regulation In Person Learning Regulation
Adoption Date:	June 23, 2025
Amendment or Re-affirmation Date:	

POLICY

THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF HORIZON SCHOOL DIVISION RECOGNIZES THAT IN-PERSON LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES ARE IMPORTANT FOR STUDENT WELL-BEING AND SUCCESS AND SUPPORTS EFFORTS TO MINIMIZE EMERGENCY HEALTH ISSUES AND THEIR DISRUPTION TO THE OPERATIONAL ACTIVITIES OF THE DIVISION IN COOPERATION WITH THE PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT AND ALBERTA HEALTH SERVICES.

DEFINITIONS

Student – “student” means a person who is enrolled in a school, or required under section 7 to attend school, but does not include a child younger than 6 years of age who is enrolled in an early childhood services program as such programs are not compulsory.

At-home learning – means teacher directed education programming provided by the board to a student on a temporary basis at the student’s residence or at a location other than the student’s regularly attended school.

GUIDELINES

1. Every student has a right to education in alignment with provisions in the In-person Learning Regulation during public health emergencies or state of emergency, and as declared under the Public Health Act or the Emergency Management Act.
 - 1.1. Any shift longer than three school days requires an exemption via Ministerial Order.
 - 1.2. Shifts of three or fewer school days to at-home learning for emergencies defined in the regulation do not require a Ministerial Order.
 - 1.3. The division retains the ability to temporarily cancel classes due to unforeseen emergent situations, such as inclement weather or a gas leak. Schools are required to maintain the minimum hours of instruction for their students as outlined in the Guide to Education.
2. When at-home learning without an in-person learning option is provided, schools must make reasonable efforts to enable a student to continue with the same courses and education program that the student is enrolled in when at-home learning begins.

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3. The division shall report any shift to at-home learning when they do not also offer an in-person option to the ministry within forty-eight (48) hours via the division's Field Services manager (see appendix).
 - 3.1. When the Board resumes providing in-person learning, the Board shall also notify the Minister.
4. When shifts to at-home learning are being considered for public health emergencies, the division shall endeavour to accommodate students at other facilities or provide other accommodations when students are unable to work from home.
 - 4.1. At-home learning without also providing an in-person learning option may occur where there are circumstances that threaten the safe operation of all or part of the building where students regularly attend school.
 - 4.1.1. This would cover things like fires and structural failures, but not, for example, where a public health emergency is declared as defined in the Public Health Act.
 - 4.1.2. In the case of a public health emergency, the Public Health Act remains the overarching direction on all public health matters, and it may prevail over the Education Act.
5. As addressed in the Family Law Act, parents will continue to be required to provide written consent for their children to receive health-related treatment, including immunization, at school.
6. This policy does not apply to home education or outreach schools where students are engaged in studies via distance education, and/or online.

REGULATIONS

1. In the event that Alberta Health Services identifies evidence of a health issue in the region, the Superintendent has the authority to make final decisions regarding crisis response unless Alberta Health Services enacts an order under legislation.
 - 1.1. When a state of emergency is declared by a Ministry of the Alberta Government, the particular ministry will have such authority.
2. The Superintendent will communicate the division's emergency preparedness procedures and response protocols for dealing with significant health issues or outbreaks. These procedures and protocols shall include:
 - 2.1. consideration of ways to potentially accommodate students at other facilities;
 - 2.2. rationale/criteria for considering a shift to temporary at-home learning;
 - 2.3. how learning will continue during the shift;
 - 2.4. how schools will enable students to participate in at-home learning, and

2.5. how schools will provide accommodations for students.

3. In accordance with directives emanating from federal and provincial authorities and the consequent circumstances that may prevail, the Superintendent may temporarily suspend the Division’s current practices and operating guidelines.
4. The Superintendent must ensure that students are provided either in-person learning or at-home learning during a public health emergency in accordance with relevant regulations and orders.
5. The principal must ensure that parental notification and consent is received in the case of a student who is under the age of 16, and that parental notification and the consent of the student or parent is received for students 16 years or older for any health measures established by the Board that apply to the body of the student.
 - 5.1. Clause 5 does not apply to routine health or safety measures such as hand washing, safety glasses, cleaning or hygiene, or any health measure specifically exempted by Order of the Minister.

Appendix - Exemption process

Exemption criteria

Exemptions from in-person learning would only be granted in exceptional situations. The Minister would consider criteria to assess the exemption request including, but not limited to, the following:

- education programming delivered in a high-risk environment not captured in Ministerial Order #23/2022 or its successor order;
- education programming delivered to a vulnerable, congregated special needs class; and
- situations where the school site is compromised, not safe for occupation and an alternate location cannot be found.

At-home learning requirements

- There is no requirement to provide at-home learning. Where an exemption has been granted allowing only at-home learning, a board must make reasonable efforts to enable students to continue with the same courses and education program that the student is enrolled in when at-home learning begins.

Exemption request process

Shifts to at home learning for three school days or fewer - notification required

1. Field Services manager will be provided the following:
 - an overview of the issue/concerns, including rationale
 - school(s) impacted
 - grades(s) and/or classes impacted

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- expected dates/duration of at-home learning shift
 - mitigation strategies being considered, how learning will continue (combining classes, deploying division staff, bussing to other facilities)
 - accommodations for students unable to learn at home
 - communication plan
 - any other relevant details
2. As soon as it is determined that there is the possibility of the shift extending beyond three school days, the superintendent shall contact their Field Services Manager and follows the procedure for a shift longer than three school days.

Shifts to at-home learning longer than three school days – exemption request required

1. For any shift longer than three consecutive school days, the superintendent shall contact their field services manager to discuss the issue and potential request for exemption. This conversation should occur as soon as the issue impacting in-person learning is determined or expected to take longer than three school days.
2. Following the discussion, the superintendent or designate will send a request to educationsystemssupport@gov.ab.ca and their field services manager in order to seek Minister approval. The following information should be included:
 - an overview of the issue/concerns, including rationale for how the request meets exemption criteria
 - school(s) impacted
 - grades(s) and/or classes impacted
 - duration of the exemption requested (proposed start and end date)
 - plan for learning continuity, mitigation strategies (combining classes, deploying division staff, bussing to other facilities)
 - accommodations for students unable to learn at home
 - communication plan
 - any other relevant details and any additional information required by Alberta Education to support the request