

August 28, 2024

## Re: Supporting a Safe and Healthy Back-to-School

Dear valued school district partners,

We look forward to supporting the health and well-being of your school communities during the 2024/2025 school year. Below, you will find important information about public health services available for students, families, and staff for the upcoming school year. Please share this information with your administrative and staff teams for their awareness, use, and distribution via email to families.

### School health resources

- Our [Healthy Back-to-School Guide](#) has information on back-to-school anxiety, nutrition, safe travel to and from school, sleep and immunizations.
- Our [School Health](#) web resource has answers to the most frequently asked health-related questions from parents, teachers, and school administrators.
- Our [Healthy Schools Communications Toolkit](#) has monthly messaging on key health topics for parents/caregivers and students. Schools are encouraged to share these messages in school newsletters and on social media channels.

### Immunizations

School-based immunization clinics:

- In the Fraser Health region, students in grades 6 and 9 are offered immunizations by nurses working in public health
- Information and consent forms for grade 6 and grade 9 students will be sent home starting in September. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to discuss consent for immunization with their children.
- Students in grades 7 and 10 who consented to immunizations in the 2023/2024 school year, but missed their appointment at the school clinic, will have the opportunity to be immunized during the grade 6 and grade 9 clinics at their schools.
- This year, public health will be offering additional immunization clinics to students in grades 8, 11, and 12. There is a particular focus on providing the HPV vaccine to unimmunized students to support BC's Cancer Prevention Strategy; however, students will be offered all vaccines for which they are eligible.



All students should stay up to date with their immunizations:

- All [routine school-aged immunizations](#) are free in British Columbia.
- Families can check their immunization records at [healthgateway.gov.bc.ca](http://healthgateway.gov.bc.ca)
- If a record is missing immunizations that were received, families can submit the record to Public Health by visiting [fraserhealth.ca/Immunization Form](http://fraserhealth.ca/ImmunizationForm)
- If more immunizations are needed, families can visit [fraserhealth.ca/GetImmunized](http://fraserhealth.ca/GetImmunized) to learn how to book an appointment.

## Childhood health screening

### Dental:

- Every three years, a province-wide kindergarten dental survey takes place in all schools to monitor trends in early childhood dental health and to identify children with dental concerns.
- This last survey took place in the 2022/2023 school year. The findings from the survey, as well as information about cavity rates in Fraser Health can be found at [fraserhealth.ca/DentalHealth](http://fraserhealth.ca/DentalHealth).
- Based on these results, in 2024/2025, dental screenings will be offered by Public Health in schools where there were a high number of students identified with dental health issues (cavities or tooth decay). A separate letter with more information and further instructions will be sent to schools in this category.

### Vision:

- Children should have a yearly eye exam with an optometrist to help detect issues early and provide treatments.
- Vision issues may impact learning in kindergarten and subsequent school years. Public Health does not currently provide vision screening in schools. All parents and caregivers are encouraged to book an eye exam for their child at their local optometrist (eye doctor).
- In B.C., basic eye exams are free up to the age of 18, although some optometrists may charge an additional fee per visit. The [Healthy Kids Program](#) may be able to support eligible low-income families with financial assistance for prescription glasses.
- To find an optometrist in your area, contact the BC Doctor of Optometry at 604-737-9907 or toll-free 1-888-393-2226 or [visit bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca](http://visit.bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca)
- For more information, visit [fraserhealth.ca/ChildHealthScreenings](http://fraserhealth.ca/ChildHealthScreenings)

### Hearing:

- Good hearing is essential for speech and language development and plays an important part in a child's social and emotional growth.
- Public Health's community audiologists provide hearing services for children from birth to 19 years of age. For children who have hearing concerns, referrals can

be made by a parent/guardian or by a health or education professional to the local public health audiology clinic using the [Audiology Clinic Referral form](#).

- For more information about hearing visit: [fraserhealth.ca/HearingServices](https://fraserhealth.ca/HearingServices).

## COVID-19

- Updated provincial guidance and information about schools and COVID-19 can be found on the [BCCDC Schools](#) web resource.

Your continued support in keeping our children and communities healthy is much appreciated.

If you or your staff have questions about the information in this letter, please contact your local [public health unit](#).

Warm Regards



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Medical Health Officer – Medical Director  
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### Public Health Units:

<b>Abbotsford HU</b> Tel: 604-864-3400 Fax: 604-864-3410	<b>Agassiz HU</b> Tel: 604-793-7160 Fax: 604-796-8587	<b>Burnaby HU</b> Tel: 604-918-7605 Fax: 604-918-7630	<b>Chilliwack HU</b> Tel: 604-702-4900 Fax: 604-702-4901	<b>Cloverdale HU, Surrey</b> Tel: 604-575-5100 Fax: 604-574-3738	<b>Guildford HU, Surrey</b> Tel: 604-587-4750 Fax: 604-587-4777
<b>Hope HU</b> Tel: 604-860-7630 Fax: 604-869-2332	<b>Langley HU</b> Tel: 604-539-2900 Fax: 604-514-8036	<b>Maple Ridge HU</b> Tel: 604-476-7000 Fax: 604-476-7077	<b>Mission HU</b> Tel: 604-814-5500 Fax: 604-814-5517	<b>New Westminister HU</b> Tel: 604-777-6740 Fax: 604-525-0878	<b>Tri-Cities HU</b> Tel: 604-949-7200 Fax: 604-949-7211
<b>Newton HU, Surrey</b> Tel: 604-592-2000 Fax: 604-501-4814	<b>North Delta HU</b> Tel: 604-507-5400 Fax: 604-507-4617	<b>North Surrey HU</b> Tel: 604-587-7900 Fax: 604-582-4811	<b>South Delta HU</b> Tel: 604-946-6953 Fax: 604-952-3550	<b>White Rock HU</b> Tel: 604-542-4000 Fax: 604-542-4009	