

# Preventing the Spread of Infections: Protecting Workers in Education

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*Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA) Webinar  
January 24, 2011*

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**Safe At Work Ontario**  
Enforcement > Compliance > Partnership >

**Ministry of Labour**

## Note

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The material in this presentation is being provided as information only. Reference should always be made to the Occupational Health and Safety Act and the regulations to ascertain one's rights and duties under the law. It is the responsibility of all workplace parties to ensure compliance with the OHSA and the regulations and to seek independent legal advice where questions remain.

We cannot provide legal advice, interpret the law or conduct research. For such assistance, we recommend contacting a lawyer.

## Overview

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- Protecting Workers in Education - Introduction
- Key Health and Safety Duties of:
  - Employers
  - Supervisors
  - Workers
- Infection Prevention and Control (IPC) Measures and Procedures
- Preventing the Spread of Infections
- Needle Safety Regulation O. Reg. 474/07
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- Infection Prevention and Control Training
- Occupational Illness Defined (OHSA)
- Occupational Illness Reporting

## Preventing the Spread of Infections: Protecting Workers in Education- Introduction

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- Outbreaks of seasonal infections often occur in schools from November to April when staff and students spend more time indoors and come into close contact with others who may be sick.
- Workers are at risk of getting sick due to exposure to seasonal infections while at work.
- The MOL has partnered with PSHSA to develop IPC information and tools to assist workplaces.
- This presentation will provide an overview of legislated responsibilities regarding seasonal infections and relevant resources available to assist employers in preventing the spread of infections in schools to protect the health and safety of workers.

## Preventing the Spread of Infections: Protecting Workers in Education

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Infection prevention and control program key components:

**Investigation:** Identification and analysis of infection problems or undesirable trends;

- monitoring staff/student illness reports
- tracking staff/student absenteeism rates

**Prevention:** Implementation of control measures to prevent transmission of infectious agents;

**Control:** Evaluation and management of outbreaks; and

**Reporting:** Provision of information as required by law.

## Key Health and Safety Duties of Employers

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Employer duties under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* include requirements that employers shall:

- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker
- Ensure that equipment, materials and protective devices as prescribed are provided
- Ensure that equipment, materials and protective equipment are maintained in good condition
- Provide information, instruction and supervision to protect worker health and safety

## Key Health and Safety Duties of Employers (continued)

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Under the *Occupational Health and Safety Act*, employers shall also:

- Prepare a written health and safety policy and develop and maintain a health and safety program to implement the policy
- Co-operate with the Joint Health and Safety Committee or Health and Safety Representative

To see more specific workplace party requirements under the OHS Act go to: [http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws\\_statutes\\_90o01\\_e.htm](http://www.e-laws.gov.on.ca/html/statutes/english/elaws_statutes_90o01_e.htm)

## Competent Person

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- An employer shall, when appointing a supervisor, appoint a competent person.

Competent person means:

- Competent by knowledge, training or experience to organize the work
- Familiar with the OHSA and regulations that apply to the work
- Knowledge of potential or actual health and safety dangers in the workplace

## Key Health and Safety Duties of Supervisors

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Supervisor duties under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* include requirements that a supervisor shall:

- Advise a worker of any potential or actual health or safety dangers known by the supervisor
- Ensure a worker works in a manner and with the protective devices, measures and procedures required by the legislation
- Ensure a worker uses or wears the personal protective equipment (PPE) required by the employer
- Take every precaution reasonable in the circumstances for the protection of a worker

## Key Health and Safety Duties of Workers

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Worker duties under the *Occupational Health & Safety Act* include requirements that a worker shall:

- Work in compliance with the provisions of the OHSA and the regulations
- Use or wear the equipment, protective devices or clothing required that the worker's employer requires to be used or worn
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor the absence of or defect in any equipment or protective device of which the worker is aware, and may endanger himself, herself or another worker
- Report to his or her employer or supervisor any contravention of this Act or the regulations or the existence of any hazard of which he or she knows

## IPC Measures and Procedures

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Measures and procedures may include but are not limited to:

- Safe work practices
- Safe working conditions
- Proper hygiene practices and the use of hygiene facilities
  - Handwashing, alcohol based hand rub
- Control of infections
- Immunization against infectious diseases
- Use of appropriate antiseptics, disinfectants and decontaminants;

## IPC Measures and Procedures continued

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Measures and procedures may include but are not limited to:

- Proper use, maintenance and operation of equipment
- Reporting of unsafe or defective devices, equipment or work surfaces
- Purchasing of properly designed and constructed equipment
- Handling, cleaning and disposal of sharp objects and waste

## Preventing the Spread of Infections

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Identify the hazards:

- Exposure to blood and body fluids; transmission of infectious diseases; occurrence of sharps injury, etc.

Implement control measures and procedures.

- Engineering controls:
  - Ventilation: general, negative, local, etc.
  - Dedicated triage areas and/or rooms as required
  - Physical barriers
  - Safety Engineered Medical Sharps
  - Provision and use of hand hygiene facilities

## Needle Safety Regulation O. Reg. 474/07

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2. (1) This Regulation applies in each of the following circumstances:

1. A worker is to do work requiring the use of a hollow-bore needle on a person for a therapeutic, preventative, palliative, diagnostic or cosmetic purpose, in any workplace.

2. A worker is to do any work requiring the use of a hollow-bore needle, in a workplace listed in subsection (2).

- Subsection (2) includes: hospitals, private hospitals, Homewood Health Centre Inc., long-term care homes, laboratories and specimen collection centres, and designated psychiatric facilities.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

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- PPE is one component of the measures and procedures to protect workers from infectious agents.
- If a worker is required to wear or use PPE then the worker must be instructed and trained in the use and limitations of the PPE.

# Infection Prevention and Control Training

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An employer shall provide information, instruction and supervision to a worker to protect the health and safety of a worker (OHSA clause 25 (2) (a)).

Infection prevention and control information and instruction may include:

- Infection Prevention and Control Measures and Procedures
- Hand hygiene
- Environmental cleaning
- Signs, symptoms of infection
- What to do in case of illness

Components to consider:

- Records of training attendance
- Record of curriculum
- Demonstrated competency

## Occupational Illness Defined (OHSA)

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- An occupational illness is defined as “a condition that results from exposure in a workplace to a physical, chemical or biological agent to the extent that the normal physiological mechanisms are affected and the health of the worker is impaired thereby and includes an occupational disease for which a worker is entitled to benefits under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, 1997”. (OHSA s. 1(1))

## Occupational Illness Reporting

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The employer's responsibilities as outlined in Section 52(2) of the Occupational Health and Safety Act are:

- “If an employer is advised by or on behalf of a worker that the worker has an occupational illness or that a claim in respect of an occupational illness has been filed with the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board by or on behalf of the worker, the employer shall give notice in writing, within four days of being so advised, to a Director, to the committee or a health and safety representative and to the trade union, if any, containing such information and particulars as are prescribed.”
- 52(2) applies with all necessary modifications if an employer is advised on or behalf of a former worker... (OHSa subsection 52(3))
  - The requirement to submit a report does not necessitate laboratory confirmation of an occupational illness.

## Contact the Ministry of Labour

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- Ministry of Labour has launched a new toll-free number to report workplace health and safety incidents, critical injury, fatality or work refusal.
  - **Call 1-877-202-0008**
- The public can also call that number if they suspect unsafe work practices or for general inquiries.
- The number operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.
- If you wish to have a specific health and safety complaint investigated in your workplace you can do so by contacting your local Ministry of Labour office [http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/about/reg\\_offices.php](http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/about/reg_offices.php)

## Resources

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### Ministry of Labour

<http://www.labour.gov.on.ca/english/hs>

### Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care

[http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/infectious/pidac/pidac\\_mn.html](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/infectious/pidac/pidac_mn.html)

### Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion (OAHPP)

<http://www.oahpp.ca/>

### Public Services Health and Safety Association (PSHSA)

<http://www.healthandsafetyontario.ca/bundles/pshsa/index.html>

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Questions?

Comments?

Thank You