

Human Resource Frequently Asked Questions – August 31, 2020

We realize that staff members have many questions regarding the return to in-person learning for the 2020-21 school year. The information contained below is not intended to provide definitive answers for each potential situation that could arise; rather it is designed to provide general answers for human resource related questions. Each situation is unique and will therefore be addressed on a case-by-case basis. *Please note, the answers below are subject to change as this is a highly uncertain time.*

It's important to remember that generally speaking, if you have human resource questions, your first point of contact will be **school administration or your direct supervisor**. If you cannot resolve your concern at the school or site level, the next step would be to contact the human resources department for assistance. You can email humanresources@pallisersd.ab.ca to contact the human resource department or contact individuals in the department.

We hope this information is helpful and as always, we want you to know we appreciate all that you do for students and for the division.

Safety and Wellness

What is the division doing to keep me safe?

While we cannot guarantee that we will never have a case of COVID-19 in our schools or division facilities, we are committed to providing a safe environment for students, staff and all stakeholders. The division has spent considerable time and effort developing a handbook with protocols and safety measures for the return of students, securing PPE, cleaning materials, signage, and other materials to help schools reopen safely in the fall. We take the safety of all our students and staff seriously and will continue to work with all stakeholders to ensure our schools are as safe as possible when students return.

What is the division doing for staff wellness?

We realize this is a challenging and uncertain time for all our staff members. Beyond the work we have done to institute new safety protocols, we have ensured all employees have access to the Employee Family Assistance Program (EFAP), which provides counselling services for employees and their families. The division also provides a broad range of paid, unpaid (with job protected status), medical and other types of leaves that are beyond what most employers provide.

Illness and COVID-19 Diagnosis

What do I do if I get sick?

Please do not come to work if you are sick, we cannot emphasize this enough. If you are sick with a non- COVID illness, you would follow typical school and division protocols and enter your absence into SRW. Depending on your symptoms, you may be required to get tested for COVID-19 before returning to work. You can call 811 or use the self-assessment tool from AHS to assist you.

<https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx>

What if I get sick during the school day?

There is extensive information on what to do in these situations in the [Palliser COVID Guidance School Re-entry](#). The key points are to put on a mask, make sure the students you are responsible for are safe and appropriately supervised by another staff member, notify school administration or your supervisor and leave the building as soon as possible.

Teachers should have a generic emergency lesson plan ready in case they have to leave suddenly.

What do I do if I have COVID-19 symptoms?

Do not come to work and contact a medical professional immediately. You can dial 811 or take the Alberta Health Services self-assessment <https://myhealth.alberta.ca/journey/covid-19/Pages/COVID-Self-Assessment.aspx> It is important you get tested as soon as possible. Most importantly, do not come to school until you have been cleared to return by a medical professional.

In terms of absence entry, you would follow the normal absence protocols for the division, your school or site and enter an absence if you are ill. In this situation you would likely be eligible for medical days according to your collective agreement or the support staff handbook.

What happens if I have a positive COVID-19 diagnosis?

You would be expected to follow all Alberta Health Services guidelines. You would not come to school or work until you are cleared by a medical professional and have tested negative for COVID-19. As well, you must let school administration or your supervisor know immediately.

They will inform central office personnel, who will work with Alberta Health Services to determine what the next steps are. In these situations, we follow the advice of medical experts, Alberta Health Services will provide the school division with direction on how to respond.

In terms of absence entry, you would use the COVID leave code (more information on this will be coming in the near future about absence codes). In this situation you would be eligible for medical days according to your collective agreement or the support staff handbook.

Please note, anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 will be treated with respect and welcomed back to the school community once cleared by a medical professional and having tested negative for COVID-19.

What happens if I have to self-isolate?

Please note, the information below is intended to provide a general understanding of possible responses to the need to self-isolate. Each self-isolation situation is unique and will be addressed on a case-by-case basis. The examples below are not considered to be a definitive response to situations where staff members may need to self-isolate.

Staff member in close contact with a positive COVID-19 case – in some instances a staff member may have been in close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19. In this case, the staff member would take at minimum the following steps:

- Do not come to work!
- Call 811 to get medical advice
- Inform their supervisor
- Follow AHS guidelines (which would typically require self-isolation, AHS will provide you with specific guidance depending on the situation)
- Arrange for COVID-19 testing

It is likely that Alberta Health Services will require the staff member to self-isolate in this situation, but they make these determinations depending on the specific circumstances. If a staff member is directed to self-isolate by Alberta Health Services, you would likely be eligible for medical days according to your collective agreement or the support staff handbook. As long as the staff member is feeling well, they would be assigned other reasonable duties that could be performed remotely (e.g. you may be asked to teach online during that time).

Staff member with possible/probable contact with COVID-19 – in some instances a staff member may have had close contact with someone who may have COVID-19 and is being tested. In these instances, we will ask Alberta Health Services to make the determination if the employee is able to come to work. Using an abundance of caution, the division may decide to

have the employee self-isolate until Alberta Health Services has decided if they can return to work. In this instance, the staff member would likely be eligible for medical days according to the applicable collective agreement or the support staff handbook and may be assigned other reasonable duties that could be performed remotely (e.g. you may be asked to teach online during that time).

In this case the staff member would take, at minimum, the following steps:

- Call 811 to get medical advice before coming to work
- Inform their supervisor
- Follow AHS guidance

International travel example – if a staff member makes the decision to travel internationally and has to self-isolate for 14 days upon return, they would be placed on an unpaid personal leave of absence during the mandated self-isolation period.

What happens if one of my students is diagnosed with COVID-19?

Depending on the situation, school administration may be notified by the parents of the student and by Alberta Health Services. If you become aware of a positive diagnosis for a student, please inform school administration or your supervisor to make sure they are aware of the diagnosis. It is important that you keep personal medical information confidential and only share this information with school administration or supervisors. School administration, central office personnel and Alberta Health Services will work collaboratively to determine next steps. In these situations, we follow the advice of medical experts, Alberta Health Services will provide the school division with direction on how to respond.

Please note, anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 will be treated with respect and welcomed back to the school community once cleared by a medical professional and having tested negative for COVID-19.

Medical Leaves & Personal Leaves

What happens if I have a pre-existing condition that might prevent me from working?

Each of these situations is unique. It is important for any staff members with pre-existing conditions to consult with a medical professional. It is also essential for any staff member in this situation to meet with school administration or their supervisor as soon as possible to discuss potential accommodations. Ideally, the staff member and school administration

or supervisor will work out reasonable accommodations that work well for the staff member, the school or division and meet the guidance of medical professionals.

If accommodations cannot be worked out at the school or site level, the Human Resource department will become involved and provide assistance.

Please note, any staff member requiring accommodations due to a pre-existing medical condition will need to provide medical documentation on a form supplied by the division. A copy of the form has been included with this email.

Staff members may be provided with reasonable accommodations, reassigned to other duties, placed on medical leave, placed on personal leave or other remedies. These decisions will be made on a case- by-case basis.

What happens if I am worried about catching COVID-19 at school?

We understand COVID-19 has created anxiety for many of our staff members. The first step would be to talk with school administration or your supervisor about your concerns. We have found that in most instances, this is enough to reassure staff. If you still have concerns, you are always welcome to contact the Human Resource Service department by emailing: humanresources@pallisersd.ab.ca

Ultimately, if you feel that you cannot work because you are worried you might catch COVID-19, the division will consider an unpaid personal leave of absence. The decision to grant an unpaid personal leave of absence will be made on a case-by-case basis.

What if a family member gets COVID-19?

These situations can vary greatly, again decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis. If the staff member lives with that family member, the staff member would take, at minimum, the following steps:

- Do not come to work!
- Call 811 to get medical advice
- Inform their supervisor
- Follow AHS guidelines (which would typically require self-isolation, AHS will provide you with specific guidance)
- Arrange for COVID-19 testing

It is likely that Alberta Health Services will require the staff member to self-isolate in this

situation. If a staff member is directed to self-isolate by Alberta Health Services, they would likely be eligible for medical days according to the applicable collective agreement or the support staff handbook. As long as the staff member is feeling well, they would be assigned other reasonable duties that could be performed remotely (e.g. you may be asked to teach online during that time).

If the staff member does not live with the family member and has not had close contact with them, they would likely be allowed to continue to come to work.

What if a family member is sick and we don't know if it is COVID-19?

If you are a close contact (e.g. live with the family member) and they have COVID-19 symptoms, you may be directed by Alberta Health Services to self-isolate. Alberta Health Services will make the determination if the employee is able to come to work. Using an abundance of caution, the division may decide to have the employee self-isolate until Alberta Health Services has decided if they can return to work. In this instance the staff member would likely be eligible for medical days according to the applicable collective agreement or the support staff handbook. As long as the staff member is feeling well, they would be assigned other reasonable duties that could be performed remotely (e.g. you may be asked to teach online during that time). In this case the staff member would take, at minimum, the following steps:

- Call 811 to get medical advice before coming to work
- Inform their supervisor
- Follow AHS guidance

If the illness is not COVID-19 and you are not directed to self-isolate but stayed home or need to stay home to take care of the sick family member you would access any family medical days available to you through the applicable collective agreement or the support staff handbook. If you do not have paid family medical days, the division would provide additional unpaid family medical days per employment standards.

What if I can't get childcare?

The first step is to discuss your situation with school administration or your supervisor. In short term situations, you may be able to access personal days available to your employee group through the applicable collective agreements or the support staff handbook. In long term situations you can request an unpaid personal leave of absence.

What if I have a family member with compromised health?

As above, the first step is to discuss your situation with school administration or your supervisor. In short term situations, you may be able to access personal days available to your employee group through the applicable collective agreements or the support staff handbook. In long term situations you can request an unpaid personal leave of absence.

Other Questions

What is the division doing about substitute teachers?

At this time, we will continue to bring in substitute teachers as we have in the past. Like anyone entering the building, they will need to do a self-screening before entering the building, confirming they do not have COVID-19 symptoms and will be expected to follow the safety measures in place.

We anticipate increased demand for substitute teachers. In response to this, we are increasing the numbers on our substitute teacher list. We will make every effort to ensure a robust substitute teacher list to meet the demand, however it is important to understand that at times it may difficult to secure a substitute in a timely manner. If a staff member is unable to secure a sub, they would follow normal school protocols and contact their school-based administrator or supervisor.

What if I don't think it is safe to work?

All employees are entitled to a safe work place. If a staff member has a concern over safety at their school or worksite, the first step is to inform school administration or your supervisor of the concern. School administration or supervisors will work collaboratively with staff members to address safety concerns. If it is not possible to resolve the concerns at the school or site level, the division OH&S coordinator must be contacted and will provide assistance and notify staff members of their rights and responsibilities under OH&S legislation.

Do I have to wear a mask?

On August 4, 2020 Alberta Health Services and Alberta Education announced that masks will be mandatory for all staff (for additional information, please see the Palliser re-entry document on the division website). The Government will provide 2 reusable masks for each staff member; however, staff are welcome to bring their own masks. Please consult with your school administrator about when and where you will need to wear a mask in your school setting.

Information on mask wearing can be found below:

<https://www.alberta.ca/masks.aspx>

Mask Exemptions?

Exemptions will be made on a case by case basis for students and staff who are unable to wear a mask due to medical or other needs. Please speak with school administration about the exemption process.

Do I have to get tested for COVID-19 prior to coming to school?

On August 12, 2020 Dr Deena Hinshaw recommended that all school-based personnel get tested before the beginning of the school year and regularly throughout the school year. We would encourage all staff to follow the recommendations of Dr. Hinshaw, however, we want to emphasize getting this testing done is voluntary.