

December 7, 2020

Dear parents, students and staff,

I am writing today to let you know about some changes Fraser Health made this weekend to the COVID-19 notification process, and to hopefully add some clarity around what to expect.

As a response to feedback they were receiving, Fraser Health has now increased the number of possible letters they may ask that we send you, on their behalf. Starting immediately, when there's a member of our school community who tests positive for COVID-19, you will now receive some combination of the following:

1. **“Early notification – exposed”** – this letter will be sent to the students and staff connected to the cohort of the person who tested positive. This only means that Fraser Health has identified that *it's possible someone in that cohort was exposed, it does not necessarily mean they were*. This letter will be sent in the period where contact tracing is still happening. If Fraser Health determines there has been a confirmed contact within that cohort, they will continue their previous process of reaching out individually if someone may need to self-isolate or also advise staff and students who may need to self-monitor.
2. **“Early notification –not exposed”** – while the above letter will be sent to the specific cohort connected to the case they're working on, this letter will be sent to the rest of the school community. This letter notifies people that contact tracing is in process within the school, but it also indicates that, while not absolute, the perceived risk is lower ... given the safety protocols in place within our schools.
3. **“Early notification – general”** – this letter will be sent less often. It will be used in cases where the person who tested positive isn't directly connected to a specific cohort, and will be sent to the full school community in place of the combination of the above two letters (for example, this may be used when the person tests positive works across multiple cohorts).
**A reminder here: in New Westminister any staff person who works across cohorts has additional distancing and masking rules in place than those who are restricted to a specific cohort.*
4. **“School bulletin”** – a school bulletin will be sent to students, staff and families to inform them that the contact tracing process has been completed.

We know this may increase the number of emails and other messages you receive for each individual exposure. But we hope the changes Fraser Health has decided to make will add a layer of transparency and reassurance, as they continue to take the lead on navigating this health crisis within our region.

Additionally, we welcome the news that the Fraser Health team has also done a substantial amount of hiring and training over the last month, with the goal of reducing the average amount of time it takes to complete the contact tracing process. This should mean we'll start to see a reversal in the growing lag times between exposures and notifications that we were receiving.

That said, because of how this virus and the process works, we have to remember there will always be some amount of time between the exposure dates and notifications. But here are a few important things we can all do mitigate that and to help everyone in New Westminster Schools stay a little safer:

- Get tested as soon as you notice possible symptoms, so that results come into the system faster.
- If Fraser Health contacts you looking for information, respond quickly with all the information they're requesting.
- Follow all the recommendations and health orders being provided by the Provincial Health Officer and by Fraser Health, to keep everyone safe and healthy – both inside and outside of our schools.

I hope this has been helpful in understanding the changes introduced this weekend. If you have questions about the contact tracing and notification process, you can reach out to the COVID-19 Call Centre at 604.918.7532. Or, if you have questions about COVID-19 or other health related concerns, please reach out to 811 or your local health provider.

Sincerely,



Karim Hachlaf
Superintendent of Schools / CEO

