



Sioux Lookout  
First Nations  
Health Authority

September 3, 2020

Dear parents and caregivers,

Returning to school has been on everyone's mind all summer. We all share the worries. How do we balance the physical and emotional health of children, family members, and educators? Will there be access to childcare and other services? What about jobs and family finances?

As a public health doctor, I know you are trying to figure out what is right for your family. The decision to go ahead with either in-school or online enrolment is difficult and personal. There is no one right answer.

Many groups are working hard to make back-to-school plans that are safe for our children. This includes schools, communities, Tribal Councils, Nishnawbe Aski Nation and Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, where I work.

### **Keeping COVID-19 out**

The best way to support safe and successful school re-opening is to keep COVID-19 out of our communities. Now, more than ever, we need to do the things that prevent the virus from spreading. That includes:

- washing our hands
- keep 2-metres or 6 feet way from people not in our social circle
- wearing a mask or face covering
- staying home when ill and getting tested.

### **What are we doing to keep schools safe?**

To protect children and educators in our schools, there will be:

- screening to ensure children and staff who show signs of illness do not attend
- isolating children and staff who are ill right away
- physical distancing as much as possible
- much more frequent cleaning and disinfecting
- cohorting (keeping groups of students and teachers together) as much as possible
- masks or face coverings for students in grades 4 and up, plus all staff.

If a student in your school has COVID-19, Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority will work with your local health program and your school. We will take the steps needed to prevent further spread of the virus.

If there are signs that more COVID-19 is cropping up in our region or your community, we will be working with your leaders and your schools to decide if there have to be changes. Your Chief and Council, with the help of Sioux Lookout First Nations Health Authority, will keep giving you up-to-date information to guide you in your decisions.

### **School or online learning – What’s the best choice for our family?**

This is a decision that only you and your family can make. These ‘starter’ questions can help:

- Does anyone in your social circle have a health condition that makes them really vulnerable if they got COVID-19?
- Do you have a child who really benefits from professional help in-class for their learning?
- Could you and your child manage online teaching at home?
- What is the best balance for the physical, social, and emotional health of your child?
- How do jobs and money issues affect your decision?
- Do you have access to childcare if you need it?
- Your answers to these questions today might change a few months down the line. What plans can you put in place for a “Plan B” if anything changes?

### **Resources for you**

Attached are some [answers](#) to questions that people often ask about going back to school. We have also attached a [chart](#) to help you screen your children every day before they go to school. If you are not sure about how to answer the screening questions, please contact your nursing station for advice.

For more information from public health to support children and families, contact:

Candi Edwards, Raising our Children Manager

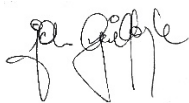
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### **Let’s take care of each other**

Let’s be kind, patient, and respectful of one another as we try to figure out these next steps. Kids, parents, caregivers, and education staff are all super-heroes. We will make back-to-school work for each family because we care so much about each other.

Stay safe,



Dr. John Guilfoyle

Public Health Physician

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