



# COMMUNICABLE DISEASES



Foundation  
to  
Year 12

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## PURPOSE

To outline the strategies and actions that schools are required to take to prevent the transmission of an infectious disease or control transmission of an infectious disease when a case is identified.

## RATIONALE

Sirius College is aware of its legal responsibilities to help manage infectious diseases in its facilities. Sirius College has an important role to play in supporting the prevention and control of transmission of infectious diseases through:

- abiding legislation requirements for school exclusions, infectious disease notifications and immunisation status recording,
- supporting the personal hygiene routines of students, staff members, volunteers and contractors. For example; provision of hand hygiene facilities
- ensuring procedures are in place to safely manage the handling of spills of contagious substances and organic fluids.

## DEFINITION

**Communicable disease** is a disease that can spread from person to person.

**Hand hygiene** is a general term referring to any action of hand cleansing. It includes hand washing with soap and water and using antimicrobial hand rubs (for example, an alcohol-based hand rub).

**Infectious diseases** are diseases caused by pathogenic microorganisms, such as bacteria, viruses, parasites or fungi; the diseases can be spread, directly or indirectly, from one person to another.

**Pandemic** is the worldwide spread of a new unperceived disease.

**Respiratory hygiene** or **cough etiquette** are terms used to describe infection prevention measures. Practices include:

- covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing
- using tissues and disposing of them appropriately
- attending to hand hygiene immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing nose.

**Self-isolation** is intended to remove direct contact with other people, in order to ensure that the virus is not transmitted. If self-isolating, people should limit their activities outside the home, not go to school or to public areas.

**Standard precautions** are the minimum infection prevention and control practices that must be used at all times for all people in all situations. The use of standard precautions aims to minimise and, where possible, eliminate the risk of transmission of infection.

**Vaccination** means having a vaccine – that is, receiving an injection.

**Immunisation** means both receiving a vaccine and becoming immune to a disease as a result of being vaccinated.

**Exclusion** is the period of time for which a student is required to not attend school.

## PREVENTION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

### Immunisation Programs

Sirius College supports health authorities and families to prevent and control infectious diseases through the support of immunisation programs via local councils and through the recordings of the immunisation status of each student.

Parents/Guardians will be asked to provide a copy of their child's immunisation certificate when enrolling at Sirius College. The immunisation certificate can be downloaded via [the mygov website](#), alternatively the child's local general practitioner will be able to provide a copy.

### Standard precautions

Students and staff members should treat all substances or organic fluids as being potentially infectious and practice standard precautions whenever dealing with them.

Standard precautions include:

- Hand hygiene should be routinely performed:
  - before, during and after preparing food
  - before and after eating
  - after using the toilet
  - after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose
  - after touching animals or pets
  - before and after treating a wound or cut
  - after handling garbage
  - when hands are visibly soiled.
- Bodily hygiene is essential by having a shower at least once every two days.

- the use of personal protective equipment (for example, gloves and masks)
- safe handling and disposal of 'sharps',
- respiratory hygiene.
  - Remind and educate students on etiquette for sneezing and coughing.
  - "Dab on your sneeze", sneeze into the elbow to prevent the spread of germs.
  - clean hands after sneezing and coughing.
  - ensure that all dirty tissues are placed into a bin and not laying around on any surfaces.
  - wipe down surfaces regularly with warm water and soap, alternatively disinfectant wipes or spray and wipe.

## Education on personal hygiene

Sirius College teaching staff members and Curriculum Management are to create a personal hygiene care and learning plan that positively reinforces progress for students identified with a learning need in the step-by-step processes of:

- hand hygiene 20 seconds
- face washing, especially after eating
- blowing and wiping their noses
- toileting

## Health Promotion

Health and Safety representatives must distribute health promotion materials to all areas within the campus with the help of administration staff and promote it to all school communities.

## General Cleaning and Hygiene supplies

Sirius College has a responsibility

- to provide soap and other hand hygiene consumables to support good hand hygiene.
- to provide appropriate personal protective equipment (for example, single-use disposable gloves, and masks) for staff to use when dealing with blood or body fluids/substances.
- to maintain school premises clean and disinfect all common areas.

# CONTROL OF TRANSMISSION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES

## Infection Register

When the school is made aware of an illness of a student, staff member or other members of school community (including staff, volunteer, contractor who regularly works at school, incursion provider, student, parent, family member(s) of a student who lives with student / staff) that is a medically confirmed case(s) of a infectious diseases, the relevant staff member(s) will enter the details of the person into the relevant form at Processmaker.

## Risk Management

Considerations for conducting a risk assessment should include:

- Proximity of a person to confirmed case,
- Duration of exposure to confirmed case,
- Size of the room in which the community member and confirmed case interacted,
- Precautions taken, including Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) worn, when in close proximity to the confirmed case.
- Students and staff members with compromised immunity or complex health care needs.

The School management will assess and mitigate the risks in three areas as follows:

- 1. Health and Safety**
  - a. Personal hygiene practices
  - b. Social distancing practices
  - c. Management of compromised immunity or complex health care needs of students and staff members
  - d. Sick Bay administration
  - e. Disinfection of the facilities
  - f. Child safety and Family violence incidents when distance learning is in effect.
  - g. Informing and training of the school community
- 2. Teaching and Learning**
  - a. Training of the school community in distance teaching and learning tools
  - b. Efficient and effective delivery of curriculum via online systems
  - c. Professional mental, emotional and psychological support for staff and students
- 3. Governance and Management**
  - a. Workplace arrangements for those require working remotely

- b. Alternate work arrangements for staff who has vulnerable health conditions
- c. Smooth transition to online Teaching and Learning Platform
- d. Managing possible financial impact on the school income caused by the outbreak

## Notification to the authorities

When the school is made aware of a medically confirmed case(s) of infectious diseases including pertussis, measles, mumps, rubella, meningococcal disease polio, or novel coronavirus but not limited to, should be reported to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to monitor disease outbreak at a school level and to provide further guidance where required.

If the school can contact the Department of Health and Human Services Communicable Disease Prevention and Control on 1300 651 160 (24 hours) or [infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:infectious.diseases@dhhs.vic.gov.au) (regularly monitored) for seeking expert advice.

## School Closure

Authorities may ask Sirius College to shut down the school due to

- lock-down procedure has been initiated for public in general by the government or
- a member of the school community is confirmed of an infectious disease or a close contact of a confirmed case.

The School Board may decide to shut down the school or initiate transition to online education for a short period of time due to health and safety risks of an outbreak. The school management will review and initiate its Business Continuity Plan.

## Communication with school community

If there is an outbreak or the school has been directed to pursue a specific action by health authorities, the school will communicate it with the broader school community to avoid any unnecessary anxiety or misinformation,

The school management will give thorough consideration as to what should be communicated to the school community where communication has been deemed necessary as listed below but not limited to;

- maintain a member of school community confidentiality
- be fact based
- be written in a way not to cause alarm
- inform parents and staff members that a school community member/s has been diagnosed with an infectious disease

## Communication with authorities

The Executive Principal and the Director of Operations will communicate with authorities to provide information about the cases and receive the instructions from them when any is available or needed.

## Communication with media

The Executive Principal and Marketing Manager will communicate with the media by preparing media releases. All media releases will be in written form. The Executive Principal may make verbal interviews with the media when needed.

## Exclusion of a child with an infectious disease

Students with certain infectious diseases, and students who have been in contact with certain infectious diseases, are required to be excluded from school for a specified period. As set out in the [Public Health and Wellbeing Regulations 2019](#), the school management must not allow a student from primary school year levels to attend school if the school is aware of the fact that

- a student is infected with an infectious disease, confirmed by a medical practitioner, that requires exclusion as described in the [DHHS School exclusion table](#)
- a student has been in contact with a person with an infectious disease as described in the School exclusion table.
- the Chief Health Officer directs the schools during an outbreak, to exclude a child based on material risk of a child contracting a vaccine-preventable disease (i.e. a child who is not immunised to be excluded until advised attendance can be resumed).

Even though secondary schools are not bound by the legislative exclusion requirements, but the school management may follow the same guidance to ensure the safety of other students and school community in general.

In the event of a public health risk, such as an infectious disease outbreak, secondary schools may be required under the Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008 to comply with the directions of the Chief Health Officer or an authorised officer.

## When a student or a staff member is unwell

Sirius College ensures that unwell students / staff do not attend the school. Isolate students / staff who become unwell during the day and send the unwell person home as soon as possible.

### **When a student or a staff member is otherwise well but required to self-isolate in accordance with requirements of the authorities**

Sirius College communicates regularly with the parents of the student or the staff member to monitor his/her health. The school ensures the student or the staff member does not return to the school until the medical clearance is provided. (Medical Certificate with a note "It is safe to return to the school".) The self-isolation period is determined by the advice of health authorities.

### **When a student or a staff member is confirmed case or close-contact of an confirmed case**

If Sirius College becomes aware of a student or staff member who has been diagnosed with an infectious disease, the relevant staff member will immediately inform DHHS which will provide additional specific advice based on the assessment of the particular circumstances. The person who is infected with an infectious disease will not return to the school until the medical clearance is provided. (Medical Certificate with a note "It is safe to return to the school".)

If DHHS becomes aware of a student or staff member who has been diagnosed with an infectious disease, the Department will inform the school based on the decision about whether to inform any members of the community in the interests of public health.

The school management will assist to trace the contacts of the person infected in relation to the school community by utilising anecdotal information provided by staff, students and parents and the relevant data stored in school systems.

### **When a student or a staff member is being tested**

If Sirius College becomes aware of any testing of staff or students due to being a suspected case, the relevant staff members will immediately inform DHHS.

### **Parents' responsibilities**

It is imperative that parents are working with the school to keep all members of the school community safe to prevent infectious disease spread across the school community. Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- keeping their child(ren) at home if they are unwell or have an infectious disease which requires their child(ren) to be [excluded attending school](#).
- keeping their child(ren) at home when an infectious disease has been diagnosed by health professionals
- informing the school if their child has an infectious disease or has been in contact with a person who has an infectious disease and providing accurate and current information regarding the health status of their child(ren) regularly

### **Staff Training**

The Health and Safety committee is to prepare training sessions for staff members which comprises of the following items;

- Signs and symptoms of infectious diseases. (if there is an outbreak, specifically the cause of the outbreak)
- Practising good hand hygiene and respiratory hygiene
- Undertaking social distancing strategies
- Infectious Disease Register and the follow up of confirmed or close-contact cases.
- School activities including excursions, camps, incursions
- Health Promotion
- Wellbeing support for staff and students

The Health and Safety representative (HSR) is to deliver training sessions and take attendance of all staff via Processmaker. All questions may not need to be answered in the training but HSRs must find out answers by reaching out relevant people at school or outside the school and respond to all staff of the campus appropriately.

### **Wellbeing Support**

The potential spread of an infectious disease may increase staff, students' and their family's feelings of stress and anxiety. This may also affect students' academic success or staff's focus on their performance.

The Student Support Department will address the specific needs of students with disabilities, disorders and syndromes. The Department will also provide skills and strategies to enhance learning, social and emotional outcomes for students with special needs and all affected student(s) during the time of outbreak.

Counsellors will also provide the support to staff or staff will have access to external provider for their emotional and psychological needs.

The Department may utilise the online platform to provide the support where needed.

## Appendix - Resources

- [The Clean Hands curriculum resources](#)
- [Protect yourself and your family: Cover your cough and sneeze - poster](#)
- [Protect yourself and your family: Wash your hands regularly - poster](#)
- Kids Help Line <https://kidshelpline.com.au/>
- Lifeline <https://www.lifeline.org.au/>
- Youth Beyond Blue <https://www.youthbeyondblue.com/>
- Emerging Minds have developed a video [Talking to children about difficult events](#) including how to manage media coverage.
- Psychological First Aid for children is an [internationally accepted strategy](#) that can be used anytime to provide basic steps in responding to children in distress
- The Student Wellbeing Toolkit provides [online resources to support student wellbeing](#).
- Beyond Blue have great ideas on looking after [your wellbeing and supporting others](#).