

AV0900 – MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE TO COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Interior Health would like to recognize and acknowledge the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Dākelh Dené, Ktunaxa, Nlaka’pamux, Secwépemc, St’át’imc, Syilx, and Tšilhqot’in Nations, where we live, learn, collaborate and work together.

Interior Health recognizes that diversity in the workplace shapes values, attitudes, expectations, perception of self and others and in turn impacts behaviors in the workplace. The dimensions of a diverse workplace includes the protected characteristics under the human rights code of: race, color, ancestry, place of origin, political belief, religion, marital status, family status, physical disability, mental disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, age, criminal or summary conviction unrelated to employment.

1.0 PURPOSE

This policy addresses exposure to Communicable Diseases that have the potential to be acquired in the workplace, with the exception of bloodborne pathogens, which are covered in [AV0300 Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids](#).

The purpose of managing occupational exposure to Communicable Diseases is to mitigate the Risk of transmission and Risk of infection for an exposed person. Interior Health’s (IH) guidelines for the management of occupational exposures to Communicable Disease reflect [Part 6 – BC Occupational Health and Safety \(BC OHS\) Regulations Biological Agents, Sections 6.33 – 6.40](#), the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) Communicable Disease Control Manual](#), and the [IH Tuberculosis Protocols Toolkit](#).

2.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
<i>Biological Agent:</i>	<i>For the purpose of this policy, an organism, which is known to be (or is reasonably believed to be) capable of causing disease in humans. The materials are classified as Risk Group 2, 3 or 4 by the Public Health Agency of Canada.</i>
<i>Communicable Disease (CD):</i>	<i>An infectious disease transmissible from person to person via direct contact with an individual or their body fluids or by indirect means such as droplets, vectors (mosquitoes or ticks) or airborne.</i>
<i>Employee:</i>	<i>A person currently employed by Interior Health in a full-time, part-time, casual, and/or term-specific position, including managers, medical staff, other health care professionals, researchers, and students</i>
<i>Immunization or Vaccination:</i>	<i>The safe and appropriate administration of a vaccine by licensed professionals to stimulate the body’s own</i>

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	<i>immune system to protect the individual against Communicable Diseases in the event of an exposure.</i>
<i>Non-IH Worker:</i>	<i>A healthcare worker not employed by IH but who provides patient care or works in institutions that provide patient care on behalf of IH (e.g., contracted physicians, students, volunteers, contractors, or other health authority/services employees).</i>
<i>Occupational Exposure:</i>	<i>For the purpose of this policy, this is an exposure to a Communicable Disease as the result of conducting work-related duties. This is often due to delayed disease identification or a breach in Personal Protective Equipment.</i>
<i>Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):</i>	<i>Used to prevent transmission of infectious agents both from patient-to-patient and from patient-to-healthcare worker. Healthcare settings must ensure sufficient supplies of PPE and provide quick, easy access to PPE. As it applies to this policy, PPE is defined as equipment or clothing that is worn to minimize exposure to Communicable Disease. PPE acts as a barrier but does not eliminate the Risk. Examples of PPE include a medical mask or a gown.</i>
<i>Provincial Workplace Health Contact Centre (PWHCC):</i>	<i>The provincial contact centre that provides a variety of occupational health services to BC health authority employees and managers.</i>
<i>Risk:</i>	<i>The possibility of an incident happening that impacts workers' health and safety. The level of Risk created by an incident is determined by analyzing the combined impact of likelihood (probability) and consequences (magnitude or severity) of exposure.</i>
<i>Screening:</i>	<i>At least one of the following: verbal history taking, examination of documented evidence, or laboratory serological tests to determine current or previous infection and or immunity status regarding a Communicable Disease.</i>
<i>Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)</i>	<i>The IH department that provides a variety of occupational health and safety services to IH Employees and Non-IH Workers.</i>

3.0 POLICY

3.1 Overview

IH acknowledges that exposure to Communicable Diseases (CD) in the workplace is an occupational hazard in healthcare and is committed to

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providing a safe environment for Employees and Non-IH Workers. IH supports this commitment through the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that support this policy as part of the [Occupational Health and Safety Program \(AV0100\)](#). This policy is also supported by the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).

When the Risk of exposure to Communicable Disease cannot be eliminated, any planned interventions and responses will prioritize the health and safety of Employees and Non-IH Workers by decreasing the Risk as low as reasonably practicable.

In the event of an exposure or outbreak of a vaccine-preventable Communicable Disease, Employees and Non-IH Workers who are unable to provide documentation of immunity status may be excluded from work for the period of communicability as outlined in the [BCCDC Communicable Disease Manual](#).

3.2 Scope

This policy applies to all IH Employees and Non-IH Workers.

4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#) and the Occupational Health and Safety Program (AV0100), the following are also required:

4.1 Senior Management

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Support and actively promote IH’s commitment to the management of occupational exposures to Communicable Diseases.
- Must consider preventive control measures in budget plans.
- Ensure directors, managers and supervisory staff monitor prevention strategies.
- Ensure directors, managers and supervisory take appropriate action as outlined by policies and procedures.
- Support middle management in the delivery of Communicable Disease exposure management.

4.2 Management and Supervisors

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Must take corrective action to eliminate unsafe conditions or activities.
- Must conduct incident investigations for injuries that require medical attention and/or result in time loss from work.
- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy.

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- Ensure workers are provided with education, training, supervision, and the necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enable workers to comply with this policy.

4.3 Employee

- Engage in a culture of safety within the organization.
- Understand and follow all requirements within this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Complete education and training per section 4.11 Education and Training.
- Report Immunizations, immunity status or decision to decline Immunizations per section 4.12 Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting and Assessment.
- Report Communicable Disease exposure incidents to direct supervisor and the PWHCC.
- Provide documentation of immunity status in the event of an exposure. This is required to prevent an exclusion from work.
- Report unsafe conditions, incidents and near misses.

4.4 Non-IH Worker

- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Ensure employer / subcontractor has current contact information.
- Be aware of their own Communicable Disease Vaccination and immunity status.
- Report Communicable Disease exposures to their supervisor and employer or educational institution via their internal guidelines.
- Provide documentation of immunity status in the event of an exposure. This is required to prevent an exclusion from work.
- In the event of a Communicable Disease Unit-identified exposure, the Non-IH Worker can report to the [CD Unit](#).

4.5 Infection Prevention and Control Program (IPAC)

- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Manage the assessment and response to Communicable Disease exposures to prevent transmission of Communicable Diseases.
- Provide education on infection prevention and control measures.
- Oversee compliance with infection prevention and control safety measures.

4.6 Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committee / Worker Representatives

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.

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- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#) for their worksite.

4.7 Employee Relations

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Support leadership in the delivery of Employee and Non-IH Worker Communicable Disease exposure management.

4.8 Workplace Health and Safety (WHS)

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Support this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Support Communicable Disease prevention strategies including Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting, Seasonal Influenza Reporting and COVID-19 Immunization Requirements.

4.9 Provincial Workplace Health Contact Centre (PWHCC)

- Complete assessments for Vaccination and immunity status for all Employees based on what Employees have reported.
- Recommend Immunization and Screening based on BCCDC guidelines for Healthcare Worker Immunization.
- Provide post-exposure management to IH Employees as outlined by the BCCDC ([Communicable Disease Manual, Chapter 1: Communicable Disease Control](#)) and BC OHS Regulations ([Part 6 – Biological Agents, Section 6.33 - 6.40](#)).

4.10 Office of the Medical Health Office (MHO) / Communicable Disease Unit (CD Unit)

- Be familiar with this policy and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Provide case-specific direction for Communicable Disease exposure management.
- Participate in assessment and response to Communicable Disease exposures in IH worksites.

4.11 Education and Training

- All Employees must receive education and training in Communicable Disease prevention strategies appropriate to the level of Risk inherent in their work.
- All Employees must complete department/job-specific WHS orientation to hazards and programs specific to their work. Screening, education, vaccine, and immunity status are incorporated into the recruitment and orientation process for new Employees.

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- All Non-IH Workers must receive and complete education and training in prevention strategies and behavior appropriate to the level of Risk of their work from their employer or academic institution including department/job specific orientation to hazards and programs specific to their work.
- New and returning Employees are to receive orientation to Communicable Disease prevention, ([New Employee Orientation: i- Learn 977](#)).
- Employees working in direct patient care roles or who have any exposure to biological are to receive:
 - [i-Learn 1634: Biological Agents 1](#)
 - [i-Learn 1635: Biological Agents 2](#)
- All individuals at Risk for an Occupational Exposure to an airborne contaminant must be fit-tested as defined in the IH Respiratory Protection Policy ([AV1900](#)) and the [IH Respiratory Protection Program](#).

4.12 Vaccine and Immunity Reporting Status and Assessment

- Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting ensures IH and the PWHCC can identify Employees who are or are not protected for a vaccine-preventable Communicable Disease in the event of an exposure or an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable Communicable Disease.
- The PWHCC provides support for employee baseline vaccine and immunity assessment, recommendations, and referrals as applicable for Immunization, serology, and TB Screening as per [BC OHS Regulation 6.39](#) and BCCDC ([Communicable Disease Control Manual, Chapter 2, Part 2: Immunization of Special Populations - Health Care Workers](#)).
- All Employees are required to report their Vaccination/immunity status using the Provincial Online Reporting Tool: <https://healthandsafety.healthcarebc.ca>.
- Non-IH Workers are to report their Vaccination/immunity status as per the requirements of their employers. Non-IH Workers must be prepared to provide documentation of their immunity status in the event of an exposure.
- All students are to report their Vaccination/immunity status as per the requirements of their academic institution and [IH's Student Placement Policy AU1100](#).
- Vaccination, with the exception of COVID-19, is not mandatory, however Employees are strongly encouraged to receive Vaccination to protect themselves for the Communicable Diseases as outlined by the [BCCDC for Health Care Workers](#). Without documentation of proof of immunity status, Employees and Non-IH Workers may be excluded from work in the event of an exposure.
 - COVID-19 Immunization requirements can be found in the COVID-19 Immunization Requirement policy (AV3100).

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- Influenza prevention requirements can be found in the Influenza Prevention policy (AV1350).

4.13 Incident Reporting and Investigation

- All Employee Communicable Disease exposure incidents (including breaches in PPE) must be reported to your supervisor and the PWHCC (1-866-922-9464).
- All Non-IH Worker Communicable Disease exposure incidents are to be reported to their supervisor and employer or academic institution for follow up via their internal guidelines. In the event of a CD Unit identified exposure, the Non-IH Worker can report to the [CD Unit](#).

4.14 Incident Follow Up

- As per [IH's Occupational Health & Safety Program Policy AV0100](#), there must be prompt and corrective action taken to eliminate unsafe conditions or activities, and conduct incident investigations for injuries which require medical attention and/or result in time loss from work.
- PWHCC provides the exposed Employee with follow-up and recommendations. PWHCC will document and maintain records in the WHITE database.
- CD Unit will follow-up with Non-IH Workers who have been identified as exposed.

5.0 REFERENCES

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13. [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#)
14. [Occupational Health – Vaccine and Immunity Status](#)
15. [Occupational Health – Communicable Disease](#)
16. [Gastrointestinal Infection Outbreak Toolkit: Long-Term Care Facilities](#).
17. [Respiratory Infection Outbreak Toolkit: Long-Term Care Facilities](#)
18. [IH Outbreak Acute Guideline Toolkit](#)
19. [AU1100 – Student Placements](#)
20. [AV0100 – Occupational Health & Safety Program](#)
21. [AV0300 – Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids](#)
22. [AV1100 – Employee Incident Reporting and Investigation](#)
23. [AV1350 – Influenza Prevention Policy](#)
24. [AV1900 – Respiratory Protection Program Policy](#)
25. [AV3100 – Covid-19 Immunization Requirement Policy](#)
26. [VD0700 – Communicable Disease Outbreak](#)

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