



Updates to COVID-19 reporting in schools

January 14, 2021 [Media inquiries](#)

Language describing case numbers of COVID-19 in schools is being updated based on feedback from education partners – including parents, schools and boards.

Currently, schools with COVID-19 cases are described as either being on alert, outbreak or watch. Each category reflects a certain number of cases at a particular school.

As of Jan. 18, the following terms will be used:

- Alert: one to four cases
- Outbreak: five-plus cases

The term “watch,” which many partners found confusing, will no longer be used.

“Since the start of the pandemic, we have worked closely with the education system and have listened to their feedback. We are making this terminology change based on their request. Clear and simple language will help all of us work together with families, Alberta Health Services and our school communities to keep students and staff safe.”

Adriana LaGrange, Minister of Education

“We are committed to clear communication, and this change in how we describe case numbers in schools helps us improve. The terms we will use going forward are more intuitive, and we hope they will help staff and parents better understand the COVID-19 situation in their schools.”

Dr. Deena Hinshaw, chief medical officer of health

“Alberta School Boards Association (ASBA) has been advocating for shifting the terminology used by the Government of Alberta regarding COVID-19 cases in schools and is supportive of changes that will provide clarity for education staff, parents, students and community members alike. We look forward to our continued collaboration with the ministry as we all ensure student and staff safety is prioritized.”

Lorrie Jess, president, Alberta School Boards Association

“CASS appreciates the time and effort of the ministry to promote efficiencies, transparency, and clarity in managing and communicating information regarding the impact of the pandemic on our communities. This strategy has strongly supported our goal of system operations sustaining a strong partnership with our staff and parent communities.”

David Keohane, executive director, College of Alberta School Superintendents

“ASBOA believes that this shift in terminology will reduce confusion and increase transparency, as it relates to COVID-19 cases in schools. We appreciate the opportunity to discuss and provide feedback to the ministry on an ongoing basis.”

Dexter Durfey, president, Association of School Business Officials of Alberta

Schools with two or more cases will continue to be reported and reflected on the [COVID-19 school map](#). Additional guidance materials for learning during COVID-19 can be found at alberta.ca/returntoschool.

Public health support provided to students, staff and families remains unchanged. Parents will continue to be notified when there is a single case in their child’s school and further supports will be initiated when there are two or more cases in a school.

Alberta's government is responding to the COVID-19 pandemic by protecting lives and livelihoods with precise measures to bend the curve, sustain small businesses and protect Alberta's health-care system.

Quick facts

- As of Jan. 14, there were 15 COVID-19 cases in schools since the return to in-class learning, representing 0.0019 per cent of the school population. Ten schools are on alert and two are on outbreak status.
- School outbreak data has been online since September 2020.

Related information

- [COVID-19 school status map](#)
- [COVID-19 guidance and health measures for schools](#)

Media inquiries

[Tom McMillan](#)

780 415-2496
Assistant Director of Communications, Health

[Justin Marshall](#)

780-913-0264
Press Secretary, Education