

August 29, 2023

## Re: Supporting a safe and healthy back to school start in Fraser Health

Dear valued school district partners,

We look forward to supporting the health and well-being of your school communities during the 2023/2024 school year. Important information about public health services for students, families and staff for the upcoming school year is listed below. Please share with your administrative and staff teams for their own awareness and use.

### School health resources

- Our [Healthy Back-to-School Guide](#) has information on back to school anxiety, nutrition, safe travel to and from school, sleep and immunizations.
- The Fraser Health [School Health](#) web resource has answers to the most frequently asked questions of parents, teachers and school administrators.
- Our new [Healthy Schools Communications Toolkit](#) has monthly messaging on key health topics for parents/caregivers and students. You are encouraged to these messages in your newsletters and on your social media channels.

### Immunizations

School-based immunization clinics:

- In the Fraser Health region, [students in grades 6 and 9](#) are offered immunizations [by public health nurses at school](#).
- Information and consent forms for Grade 6 and Grade 9 students will be sent home starting in September. Parents/caregivers are encouraged to discuss [consent for immunization](#) with their children.
- Students in grades 7 and 10 who consented to immunizations in the 2022/2023 school year, but missed their appointment at the school clinic, will have the opportunity to be immunized during the Grade 6 and Grade 9 clinics at their schools.

All students should stay up-to-date with their immunizations:

- Families can check their immunization records at [healthgateway.gov.bc.ca](http://healthgateway.gov.bc.ca)

- If a record is missing immunizations that were received, families can submit the record to Public Health by visiting [fraserhealth.ca/ImmunizationForm](https://fraserhealth.ca/ImmunizationForm).
- If more immunizations are needed, families can visit [fraserhealth.ca/GetImmunized](https://fraserhealth.ca/GetImmunized) to learn how to book an appointment.

## Childhood health screening

### Dental:

- Every three years, a province-wide kindergarten dental survey takes place in all schools to monitor trends in early childhood dental health and to identify children with dental concerns.
- This last survey took place in the 2022/2023 school year. The findings from the survey, as well as information about cavity rates in Fraser Health can be found at [fraserhealth.ca/DentalHealth](https://fraserhealth.ca/DentalHealth).
- Based on these results, in 2023/2024, dental screenings will be offered by Public Health in schools where there were a high number of students identified with dental health issues (cavities or tooth decay). A separate letter with more information and further instructions will be sent to schools who fall into this category.

### Vision:

- Children should have a yearly eye exam with an optometrist to help detect issues early and provide treatments.
- Vision issues may impact learning in kindergarten and subsequent school years. Public Health does not currently provide vision screening in schools. All parents and caregivers are encouraged to book an eye exam for their child at their local optometrist (eye doctor).
- In B.C., basic eye exams are free up to the age of 18, although some optometrists may charge a small user fee per visit. The [Healthy Kids Program](#) may be able to support eligible low-income families with financial assistance for prescription glasses.
- **To find an optometrist in your area**, contact the BC Doctors of Optometry at 604-737-9907 or toll-free 1-888-393-2226 or visit [bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca](https://bc.doctorsofoptometry.ca)
- For more information, visit [fraserhealth.ca/ChildHealthScreenings](https://fraserhealth.ca/ChildHealthScreenings).

### Hearing:

- Good hearing is essential for speech and language development and plays an important part in a child's social and emotional growth.
- Public Health's community audiologists provide hearing services for children from birth to 19 years of age. For children who have hearing concerns, referrals can be made by a

parent/guardian or by a health or education professional to the local public health audiology clinic using the [Audiology Clinic Referral form](#).

- For more information about hearing visit: [fraserhealth.ca/HearingServices](https://fraserhealth.ca/HearingServices)

## COVID-19

- Updated provincial guidance and information about schools and COVID-19 can be found on the [BCCDC Schools](#) web resource.

Your continued support in keeping our children and communities healthy is much appreciated.

If you or your staff have questions about the information in this letter, please contact your local health unit.

Warm Regards,



Ariella Zbar MD, CCFP, MPH, MBA, FRCPC  
**Medical Health Officer – Interim Executive Medical Director**

### Public Health Units:

<b>Abbotsford HU</b> Tel: 604-864-3400 Fax: 604-864-3410	<b>Agassiz HU</b> Tel: 604-793-7160 Fax: 604-796-8587	<b>Burnaby HU</b> Tel: 604-918-7605 Fax: 604-918-7630	<b>Chilliwack HU</b> Tel: 604-702-4900 Fax: 604-702-4901	<b>Cloverdale HU, Surrey</b> Tel: 604-575-5100 Fax: 604-574-3738	<b>Guildford HU, Surrey</b> Tel: 604-587-4750 Fax: 604-587-4777
<b>Hope HU</b> Tel: 604-860-7630 Fax: 604-869-2332	<b>Langley HU</b> Tel: 604-539-2900 Fax: 604-514-8036	<b>Maple Ridge HU</b> Tel: 604-476-7000 Fax: 604-476-7077	<b>Mission HU</b> Tel: 604-814-5500 Fax: 604-814-5517	<b>New Westminster HU</b> Tel: 604-777-6740 Fax: 604-525-0878	<b>Tri-Cities HU</b> Tel: 604-949-7200 Fax: 604-949-7211
<b>Newton HU, Surrey</b> Tel: 604-592-2000 Fax: 604-501-4814	<b>North Delta HU</b> Tel: 604-507-5400 Fax: 604-507-4617	<b>North Surrey HU</b> Tel: 604-587-7900 Fax: 604-582-4811	<b>South Delta HU</b> Tel: 604-946-6953 Fax: 604-952-3550	<b>White Rock HU</b> Tel: 604-542-4000 Fax: 604-542-4009	