



Guidance for Critical (Red) Response Level for Manitoba Schools

This document sets out the guidelines and procedures that will be followed in Manitoba schools in the event that a Critical (Red) PRS level is declared for schools.

The [Pandemic Response System](#) (PRS) helps Manitobans understand the current level of risk and the public health guidance that must be followed. A Critical (Red) PRS level may be declared when there are widespread outbreaks and clusters of COVID-19 that cannot be controlled through testing and contact tracing, and there are transmission levels that public health officials and the health care system deem concerning or critical. Please visit www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/protection/soe.html for the most up-to-date public health orders.

During a Critical (Red) PRS level, schools will be closed, except to the children of critical services workers who are in Kindergarten to Grade 6. Students with special needs in K to 12, as defined on page 5 of *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) continue to have the option to attend school, as needed when outlined in their student-specific plans. As always, the best interests of students would be at the forefront and individual student needs would be addressed through the student-specific planning process. In addition, schools and school divisions may use their discretion to accommodate students who are identified as being at risk due to cognitive, perceptual, social, emotional, behavioural, or physical factors.

What does a Critical (Red) PRS level mean for schools?

- All students move to teacher-led remote learning.
- Schools and school divisions will endeavour to accommodate K–6 children of critical services workers who cannot make alternative care arrangements so that these students may attend school. While at school, these students will participate in and receive support for the same teacher-led remote learning that their classmates who are learning from home are receiving.
- Students with special needs in K to 12, as defined on page 5 of *Appropriate Educational Programming in Manitoba: Standards for Student Services* (2006) and those identified as being at risk as outlined previously, continue to have the option to attend school, as outlined in their student-specific plans. As always, the best interests of students would be at the forefront. Supports and instruction will be guided by the student-specific planning process.

Who qualifies as a critical services worker?

Manitoba Education considers the following to be critical services workers:

- Health/Health Services Workers
- Kindergarten to Grade 12 Education Providers (all teachers, administrators, and support staff)
- Child Care Workers
- Law Enforcement
- Corrections Workers
- Fire and Paramedic First Responders
- Direct Social Services and Child Protection Workers

Additional critical services workers may include people who provide critical services to Manitobans, such as front-line natural resource workers, essential supply chain staff (e.g., truck drivers delivering food, medications and other essential goods; food industry staff working in food processing plants, etc.) gas station attendants, and grocery store staff.

NOTE: Schools and school divisions may also use their discretion to accommodate high-risk students in order to mitigate serious concerns of disengagement.

Do certain critical services workers have priority to send their children to school?

Priority access will be given to health care providers. Other critical services workers will be eligible and prioritized by schools/school divisions based on local needs and contexts. The number of students a school can safely manage, while maintaining physical distancing requirements, may be limited by individual facilities.

Will additional school staff be hired to supervise children during the school day?

If additional school staff need to be hired to provide supervision to children of critical services workers, and high-risk children, school divisions may hire additional supervisory staff provided they have completed a Child Abuse Registry and a Criminal Record Check. Schools are exempt from hiring supervisory staff that have specific child care qualifications as per the Public Schools Act.

What about before- and after-school care?

Although schools are not responsible for supervision of students outside of regular school hours, they are encouraged to partner with existing child care providers to ensure care for K–6 children of critical services workers, children with special needs and those at risk during, before, and after school hours.

Child care in schools will operate at reduced capacity and will be limited to students of critical services workers, as outlined in the Public Health Guidance for Child Care Centres.

Those in need of child care can visit www.manitoba.ca/childcaresearch to locate facilities with current vacancies.

What additional public health measures are required in schools during a Critical (Red) PRS level?

Multiple student groups and cohorts may operate in a school setting at the same time, provided these groups can be kept separate to prevent contact with other groups. The use of separate entrances/exits and staggered drop-off/pick-up schedules should be employed to minimize congestion and mixing of groups.

Specific and current guidelines for mask use in schools can be found at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/mask_guidance.pdf.

School divisions are not responsible for student transportation during a Critical (Red) PRS level. Recognizing that, in some cases, busing may be the only way for children of critical services workers, students with special needs and those at risk to get to the school, local decisions may be made to bus students who do not have alternative means of transportation, provided **two metres of distancing between passengers is maintained on the bus** and all other transportation guidelines are followed.

What is the in-school environment for Kindergarten to Grade 6 students during a Critical (Red) PRS level?

Children who attend school during a Critical (Red) PRS level will be supervised while at school and will be supported by staff in the school to participate in remote learning, as per Manitoba Education Standards for Remote Learning (see www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/remote_learn_standards.pdf).

Students will participate in real-time online instruction that is coordinated and scheduled by their in-class teacher(s), and they will be provided with opportunities to engage in independent work while at school. If technology is required for participation, it will be provided to students, unless students and families opt to bring their own device. If the use of technology is not possible, print-based options or alternatives will be explored, in discussion with the school division.

For students with special needs and those at risk, supports and instruction will be guided by the student-specific planning process.

Additional up-to-date directives from Manitoba Education and guidelines approved by public health officials can be found at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/index.html.