

CIRCULAR

Date: November 25, 2020

To: Superintendents of School Divisions
Principals of Independent Schools
Manitoba School Boards Association
The Manitoba Teachers' Society
Manitoba Association of School Superintendents
Manitoba Association of School Business Officials
Manitoba Association of Parent Councils
Manitoba Federation of Independent Schools

Subject: COVID-19 K–12 Education—Updates on work placement learning opportunities including guidance and protocols

Circular Number: COVID19: 2020-005

Type: Policy Procedure For Information

Effective Date: Immediately

Background

This circular provides updated information and clarification of questions received from school divisions and schools regarding work placement learning opportunities such as the High School Apprenticeship Program (HSAP), Cooperative Vocational Education (CVE), Credit for Employment (CFE), Career Development Internship (CDI), the Community Service Student-Initiated Project (CSSIP), and other work placements and coursework practicums.

The Manitoba Pandemic Response System (see www.manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/restartmb/pandemic_response_system.pdf) sets out specific and focused public health responses on a provincial, regional, community, and business or sector basis that can scale up or down, depending on the risk of the virus at that time.

On June 1, 2020, the department notified school divisions that all work placement learning experiences with on-the-job placements and/or paid employment, including community service projects, could resume and were no longer suspended, provided that school divisions could do so in alignment with public health guidelines and follow public health orders (e.g., social distancing, applicable personal protective equipment (PPE) use, and hygiene-related recommendations).

When planning for work placement opportunities, school divisions should note the risk level and response and be guided by public health guidelines, which will vary depending on region and industry-specific restrictions. For updated information for each region relative to the work placement being planned, please visit www.manitoba.ca/covid19/restartmb/prs/index.html.

COVID-19 Work Placement Guidance and Protocols

- School divisions should carefully consider decisions around students continuing to work for an employer as part of an approved course or program during the pandemic. Subject to the setting (industry-specific or region), schools offering work experience placements—both paid and unpaid—should conduct a risk assessment of the placement site. If restrictions are due to safety concerns or lack of available and appropriate placements, schools may explore alternatives in order to support students completing their program of study.
- The resources *Safety Preparation for Student Work Experience: Roles and Responsibilities* (see www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/safety-docs/safe_work_flyer.pdf) and *Safety Preparation for Student Work Experience: Safety Plan Framework* (see www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/cur/cardev/safety-docs/safety_plan_framework.pdf) can assist in planning and ensure oversight is in place for student work placements. Students need to understand their right to refuse work if they identify hazards in the course of their duties. Students must ensure they are following appropriate public health guidelines while at the work placement or place of employment.
- **If the work placement is in a region/community that is under the Restricted (Orange) response level:** Schools should consider the appropriateness of in-person work placements on a program-by-program basis based on the risk assessment, and ensure that sufficient safety measures for students can be provided onsite under the heightened restrictions. Schools need to consider whether appropriate teacher oversight of the placement can still be maintained.
- **If the work placement is in a region/community that is under the Critical (Red) response level:** If the risk assessment is deemed too high under the Critical (Red) response level, schools may consider suspending work experience placements and explore alternatives to support students completing their program of study. These decisions should be made in consultation with students, parents, caregivers, employers, administration, and the school division safety committee, and they should follow current public health guidelines.

Guidance on Mask Use

Public health recommendations for masks may be adjusted for these response levels and should be monitored. Specific guidelines on current mask use in workplaces can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/guidance.html.

Additional Resources

For more information on Manitoba Education's COVID-19 response, including regularly updated frequently asked questions, please see www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid.

Manitoba Education is available to support school divisions and connect them with available resources.

If you have any questions regarding the COVID-19 response, please email educovid19@gov.mb.ca.