

December 10, 2020

Memorandum to: Directors of Education
Superintendents of Special Education
School Authorities

From: Nancy Naylor
Deputy Minister of Education

Subject: School-Based Health and Rehabilitation Services

I would like to thank you once again for all the work you have done to support students through the re-opening of schools and recognize the planning that has gone into preparing for a safe and successful school year.

As part of the return to school direction in the [Guide to Re-Opening Ontario's Schools](#), school boards were expected to work with partners to develop local protocols for school access by regulated professionals, regulated social service professionals and paraprofessionals for the purpose of delivering school-based supports and services. This includes staff involved in the provision of services by Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs) and Children's Treatment Centres (CTCs). The ministry expects that these protocols should now be in place.

I know that we share a firm commitment to supporting students with special education and/or health needs, ensuring they have access to the supports they need to participate in learning. School boards have a duty to accommodate students with special education needs and to provide meaningful access to education up to the point of undue hardship.

It continues to be the ministry's expectation that school boards work with their local partners to facilitate access to schools by service providers, including those providing services on behalf of LHINs and CTCs. The ministry expects these protocols to outline how space can be set aside for students receiving these services and how, when remote service is appropriate, students can be supported to access remote services to support the equitable delivery of school-based supports and services across boards.

With respect to remote access for students, boards should review their cyber security and privacy policies, and develop updates related to virtual health service delivery that are compliant with FIPPA and *Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA)* as well as Government of Ontario IT Standards (GO-ITS) on security. These policies should include clear protocols and procedures for providers to follow so that they can ensure student safety and security. The protocols should be clearly communicated to providers, students, and parents. Where appropriate, boards are encouraged to facilitate the use of CTCs' digital health platforms for the purpose of care delivery.

The Ministry of Education has entered into an agreement with Ontario Health to make the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN) virtual care platform available to all publicly funded school boards at no cost for one year, from November 1, 2020 until October 31,

2021. The ministry encourages school boards that have not yet done so to sign up for the OTN platform.

The OTN platform supports the safety and security of students and other board users and is compliant with PHIPA. The OTN can be used by regulated professionals (e.g., social workers, psychologists, psychotherapists, speech and language pathologists, occupational therapists) to provide supports to students remotely.

For information about the Ontario Telemedicine Network (OTN), please access their website at www.otn.ca and express your interest in using their virtual platform by sending an e-mail to the ministry as soon as possible. Please use the following e-mail address: SpecialEducation@ontario.ca. Information about next steps will be provided to those who send an email expressing interest.

The ministry expects that boards will also consider the needs of students participating in remote learning in their protocols for remote delivery. For instance, those who remain eligible for nursing and dietetics services (which may be delivered in their homes) and school-based rehabilitation services should be addressed. These supports and services may be delivered remotely or at other community locations where necessary. As is the case with in-person delivery, it is possible students may need to have their therapy scheduled during instructional time and school boards are encouraged to make arrangements with the CTCs.

School boards are encouraged to follow the advice of local public health units (PHUs) and other local health partners to ensure that schools have proper health measures in place and can operate safely.

Thank you for your flexibility in making sure students have access to the educational and community-based supports they need.

Should you require any additional information or have any questions please contact Jeff Butler at jeff.butler@ontario.ca.

Again, thank you for your cooperation and willingness to work together to support our students.

Nancy Naylor

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