



Administrative
Code: AV Workplace Health and Safety

## AV0900 - MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE TO COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

### 1.0 PURPOSE

This policy addresses exposure to communicable diseases that have the potential to be acquired in the workplace, with the exception of bloodborne pathogens which are covered in [AV0300 Management of Occupational Exposure to Blood and Body Fluids](#).

The purpose of managing occupational exposure to communicable diseases is to mitigate the risk of transmission and possibility of infection of an exposed person. Interior Health's (IH) guidelines for the management of occupational exposures to communicable disease reflect [Part 6 – BC Occupational Health and Safety \(BC OHS\) Regulations Biological Agents, Sections 6.33 – 6.40](#), the [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\) Communicable Disease Control Manual](#), and the [Interior Health \(IH\) Tuberculosis Protocols Toolkit](#).

### 2.0 DEFINITIONS

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>Biological Agent</b>	An organism, including a bloodborne pathogen, which is known or reasonably believed to be capable of causing disease in humans. The materials are classified as Risk Group 2, 3 or 4, by the <a href="#">Public Health Agency of Canada</a> .
<b>Bloodborne Pathogen</b>	Pathogens (e.g., Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C, or HIV) that can be transmitted from one person to another via blood and body fluids. The risk of transmission varies depending on the pathogen and the type of body fluid.
<b>Communicable Disease (CD)</b>	An infectious disease transmissible from person to person via direct contact with an individual or their body fluids or by indirect means such as droplets, vectors (mosquitoes or ticks), or airborne.
<b>Employee</b>	A worker employed directly by IH. Includes unionized, excluded, and employed student nurses.
<b>Immunization or Vaccination</b>	The safe and appropriate administration of a vaccine by licensed professionals to stimulate the body's own immune system to protect the individual against communicable diseases in the event of an exposure.
<b>Non-IH Worker</b>	A health-care worker not employed by IH but who provides patient care or works in institutions that provide patient care on behalf of IH (e.g., contracted physicians, students, volunteers, contractors, or other health authority/services employees).

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<b>Occupational Exposure</b>	Exposure to a harmful or hazardous substance (chemical, biological, radiological, neurological) resulting from conducting work related duties during the course of employment that can result in an occupational disease.
<b>Provincial Workplace Health Contact Centre (PWHCC)</b>	The provincial contact centre that provides a variety of occupational health services to BC health authority employees and managers.
<b>Risk</b>	The possibility of an incident happening that impacts worker's health and safety. The level of risk created by an incident is determined by analyzing the combined impact of likelihood (probability) and consequences (magnitude or severity) of exposure.
<b>Screening</b>	One of, or a combination of, verbal history taking, examination of documented evidence and laboratory serological tests to determine current or previous infection and / or immunity status regarding a communicable disease.
<b>Senior Management</b>	Includes Senior Executive Team, Executive Directors, and Directors, and
<b>Workplace Health and Safety (WH&amp;S)</b>	The IH department that provides a variety of occupational health and safety services to Interior Health employees and non-IH workers.

### 3.0 POLICY

#### 3.1 Management of Occupational Exposure to Communicable Diseases Overview

IH acknowledges that exposure to communicable diseases (CD) in the workplace is an occupational hazard in healthcare and is committed to providing a safe environment for employees, non-IH workers, patient/clients/residents, and the public. IH supports this commitment through the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of initiatives that support this policy as part of the IH Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) Program.

This policy is supported by the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).

When the risk of a communicable disease exposure (CDE) cannot be eliminated, any planned interventions/responses will prioritize the health and safety of employees and non-IH employed workers by decreasing the risk as low as reasonably practicable.

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### 3.2 Scope

- This policy applies to all IH employees and non-IH workers.
- In the event of an exposure/outbreak of a vaccine-preventable communicable disease, employees and non-IH workers may be excluded from work for the period of communicability as outlined in the BCCDC Communicable Disease Manual ([Chapter 1: Communicable Disease Control](#)).

## 4.0 ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1 In addition to the roles and responsibilities outlined in the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#) the following is also required:

### Senior Management:

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Support and actively promote IH's commitment to the management of occupational exposures to communicable diseases.
- Ensure consideration is given to preventive control measures in budget plans.
- Ensure directors/managers/supervisory staff monitor prevention strategies and take appropriate action as outlined by policies and procedures.
- Support front line management in the delivery of communicable disease exposure management.

### Management and Supervisors:

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy (Policy AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Ensure workers are provided with education, training, supervision and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to enable them to comply with Interior Health's policies and procedures for preventing the spread of communicable diseases.

### Employee:

- Engage in a culture of safety within the organization.
- Understand and follow all requirements within this policy (Policy AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Report immunizations, immunity status or decision to decline immunizations to Workplace Health and Safety for all communicable diseases as recommended by the BCCDC for [Health Care Workers](#).
  - For COVID-19 immunization requirements see policy [AV3100 COVID-19 Immunization Requirement Policy](#)
  - Influenza prevention requirements can be found in the [Influenza Prevention policy \(AV1350\)](#).
- Report communicable disease exposures incidents to the PWHCC for assessment, incident reporting and further direction.

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### Non-IH Worker:

- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy (Policy AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Ensure employer / subcontractor has current contact information.
- Be aware of their own communicable disease vaccination and immunity status.
- Report communicable disease exposures to their employer or educational institution via their internal guidelines.

### Infection Prevention and Control Program (IPAC):

- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy (AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Manage the assessment and response to communicable disease exposures to prevent transmission of communicable diseases.
- Provides education on infection prevention and control measures.
- Oversee compliance with infection prevention and control safety measures.

### Joint Occupational Health and Safety (JOHS) Committee / Worker Representatives:

- Promote and actively support a culture of safety within the organization.
- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy (AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#) for their [worksite](#).

### Employee Relations:

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization.
- Be familiar with all aspects within this policy (AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Support front line management in the delivery of employee and non-IH employed worker communicable disease exposure management.

### Workplace Health and Safety (WH&S):

- Promote a culture of safety within the organization
- Support this policy (AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Support communicable disease prevention strategies including Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting and Seasonal Influenza Reporting and COVID-19 Immunization Requirements.

### Provincial Workplace Health Contact Centre (PWHCC):

- Complete assessments for vaccination and immunity status for new employees, provide recommendations for immunization and screening based on BCCDC guidelines for Healthcare Worker Immunization.
- Provide IH employees with communicable disease post-exposure management as outlined by the BCCDC ([Communicable Disease Manual, Chapter 1: Communicable Disease Control](#)) and BC OHS Regulations ([Part 6 – Biological Agents, Section 6.33 - 6.40](#)).

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### Office of the Medical Health Office (MHO) / Communicable Disease Unit (CD Unit):

- Be familiar with this policy (Policy AV0900) and the [IH Biological Exposure Control Plan](#).
- Provide case-specific direction for communicable disease exposure management.
- Participate in assessment and response to communicable disease exposures in IH worksites.

### 4.2 Education and Training

- All employees must receive education and training in communicable disease prevention strategies appropriate to the level of risk inherent in their work.
- All employees must complete department/job-specific WH&S orientation to hazards and programs specific to their work. Screening, education, vaccine and immunity status are incorporated into the recruitment and orientation process for new employees. All non-IH workers must receive and complete education and training in prevention strategies and behavior appropriate to the level of risk of their work from their employer or academic institution including department/job specific orientation to hazards and programs specific to their work.
- New and returning employees are to receive orientation to communicable disease prevention, ([New Employee Orientation: i- Learn 977](#)).
- All individuals at risk for an occupational exposure to an airborne contaminant must be fit tested as defined in the [IH Respiratory Protection Policy \(AV1900\)](#) and the [IH Respiratory Protection Program](#).

### 4.3 Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting and Assessment

- Vaccine and Immunity Status Reporting ensures Interior Health and the PWHCC can identify employees who are or are not protected for a vaccine-preventable communicable disease in the event of an exposure or an outbreak of a vaccine-preventable communicable disease.
- The PWHCC provides support for employee baseline vaccine and immunity assessment, recommendations, and referrals as applicable for immunization, serology, and TB screening as per [BC OHS Regulation 6.39](#) and BCCDC ([Communicable Disease Control Manual, Chapter 2, Part 2: Immunization of Special Populations - Health Care Workers](#)).
- All employees are required to report their vaccination/immunity status using the Provincial Online Reporting Tool: <https://healthandsafety.healthcarebc.ca>.
- Non-IH employed workers are to report their vaccination/immunity status as per the requirements of their employer. All students are to report their vaccination/immunity status as per the requirements of their academic

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institution and [IH's Student Placement policy AU1100](#).

Vaccination with the exception of COVID-19 is not mandatory, however employees are strongly encouraged to receive vaccination to protect themselves for the communicable diseases as outlined by the BCCDC for [Health Care Workers](#).

- COVID-19 immunization requirements can be found in the [COVID-19 Immunization Requirement policy \(AV3100\)](#).
- Influenza prevention requirements can be found in the [Influenza Prevention policy \(AV1350\)](#).

### 4.4 Incident Reporting and Investigation

All employee communicable disease exposure incidents are to be reported to your supervisor and the PWHCC (1-866-922-9464).

All non-IH employed worker communicable disease exposure incidents are to be reported to their employer or academic institution for follow up via their internal guidelines.

### 4.5 Incident Follow-Up

As per [IH's Occupational Health & Safety Program Policy AV0100](#), Management is to ensure prompt and corrective action has been taken to eliminate unsafe conditions or activities, and to conduct incident investigations for injuries which require medical attention and/or result in time loss from work.

## 5.0 RESOURCES AND TOOLS

- [IH BIOLOGICAL EXPOSURE CONTROL PLAN](#)
- [OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH – VACCINE AND IMMUNITY STATUS](#)
- [OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH – COMMUNICABLE DISEASE](#)
- [IV0400 – GASTROINTESTINAL OUTBREAK GUIDELINES](#)
- [IV0500 – RESPIRATORY INFECTION \(RI\) OUTBREAK GUIDELINES](#)

## 6.0 RELATED POLICIES

- [AU1100 – STUDENT PLACEMENTS](#)
- [AV0100 – OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & SAFETY PROGRAM](#)
- [AV0300 – MANAGEMENT OF OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE TO BLOOD AND BODY FLUIDS](#)
- [AV1100 – EMPLOYEE INCIDENT REPORTING AND INVESTIGATION](#)
- [AV1350 – INFLUENZA PREVENTION POLICY](#)
- [AV1900 – RESPIRATORY PROTECTION PROGRAM POLICY](#)
- [AV3100 – COVID-19 IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENT POLICY](#)
- [VD0700 – COMMUNICABLE DISEASE OUTBREAK](#)

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### 7.0 REFERENCES

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