




# BCTF

**British Columbia Teachers' Federation** A Union of Professionals  
100-550 West 6th Avenue, Vancouver, BC V5Z 4P2 [bctf.ca](http://bctf.ca)  
604-871-2283 1-800-663-9163   
Health and safety fax: 604-871-2285 | email: [wcbadvocate@bctf.ca](mailto:wcbadvocate@bctf.ca)

DATE February 25, 2021

## **BACKGROUNDER: BC Teachers and COVID-19 Infection—WorkSafeBC claims summary**

BC teachers are at a significantly greater risk of occupational COVID-19 infection compared with many other workers in the province. This is borne out in data provided by WorkSafeBC (WCB) which indicates that public school district workers including teachers, are filing compensation requests in greater numbers than in most other work settings.

The number of BC teachers filing compensation requests for occupational COVID-19 infection has seen a jump since early December 2020, when relatively few claims were received by WCB.

### **Large increase in the number of COVID-19 claims in public school districts**

- The education services sector has seen a 250% increase in the number WCB compensation requests since December 10, 2020, when 89 compensation requests had been filed by workers in the education services sector compared to 221 claims filed to date.
- The vast majority of these WCB COVID-19 claims, at 95%, originate in a public school district setting (210 of 221 COVID-19 claims).

### **Education sector has second highest number of COVID-19 claims filed**

- The education services sector is second only to the health care services sector in the number of compensation claims received by WCB for occupational COVID-19 infection.
- While a majority of claims originate in health care work settings (2,398 of 3,954 compensation requests as of February 25, 2021), workers in public school district settings experience significant levels of COVID-19 exposure and infection.
- When looking at claims data by work setting (WCB industry classification unit) workers in public school districts have the third highest number of compensation requests (at 210 claims), after the long-term care (950 claims), and acute care settings (931 claims). Health care workers in other settings such as emergency health care, have filed fewer compensation requests than workers in public school districts.

### **Elementary and secondary teachers account for over half of education sector COVID-19 claims**

- Elementary and secondary school teachers have seen 108 compensation requests with WCB evaluated, representing 58% of these compensation requests. This is a ninefold increase since December 10, 2020, when just 12 compensation requests had been evaluated. This compares to a total of 51 claims by education assistants (EA's) as of February 25, 2021.

- A high percentage at 82%, of teachers' claims for occupational COVID-19 infection have been accepted by WCB. This compares to 70% of claims for occupational COVID-19 infection by all workers in British Columbia.
- The relatively large number of COVID-19 claims' and high percentage of claim acceptance suggests teachers working in a classroom environment experience a significantly greater risk of exposure to COVID-19 compared to other workers.

### **BC Teachers facing barriers to receiving compensation**

- Despite being approved for WCB benefits, some teachers have experienced push back, with school district employers initiating appeals of claim acceptance in at least three claims to date.
- Some teachers also face barriers to receiving the compensation they need during the COVID-19 pandemic. Teachers required to self-isolate due COVID-19 exposure, who do not diagnose with COVID-19 infection, are unable to claim benefits from WCB. This may lead to income loss for some teachers.

The BCTF's WorkSafeBC Advocacy Office is advising all teachers working in a classroom environment where there is a significant risk of exposure to COVID-19 to work with their local union to file a claim with WorkSafeBC should they be diagnosed with the virus.