



State of the Schools Report

Safe Return to Campus and Attendant Service Programs

Overview

As many schools work to transition students back to on-campus learning, the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact higher education for students with disabilities disproportionately as compared with non-disabled students. The COVID-19 pandemic has brought accessibility issues into sharper focus, particularly as home and online schooling, isolation from friends and teachers, and the loss of district-provided services continue to challenge our youth. As students transition to college age, it is important to note that young people aged 15–24 are more likely to experience mental-health-related disabilities than any other age group in Canada. At the same time, three out of five students with disabilities have a mental health-related disability, and rates of anxiety and depression have only risen since the start of the pandemic. The more severe a student's disability, the less likely a student is to be employed after completing secondary education.

This report is intended to help students with disabilities learn about the different types of post-secondary education available, accommodations processes, self-advocacy, and their rights as students. Further support is always available through the National Educational Association of Disabled Students, whose contact information will be at the end of this report.

Campus Safety Measures

One major finding of this study is that vaccine mandates are in place for a majority of Canadian institutions, following provincial/territorial guidelines. The study also finds that virtually all schools mandate mask wearing in indoor spaces. Information about other safety measures, such as enhanced sanitation, self-reporting of symptoms and self-isolation, designated access points, reduced room capacity, physical barriers, restricted public access to the campus, and required testing for unvaccinated students varies widely. Several of these schools make clear on their websites that surveys of their students and staff indicate high levels of vaccination; this information is being used to support the schools' decisions not to impose stricter vaccine requirements. Many of the schools that have no vaccine mandate provide similar information indicating high levels of vaccine compliance without a mandate in place.

Overall, approximately 56% of Canadian public schools and 45% of private schools require vaccination to access at least some amenities on campus, and nearly all mandate non-medical masks in indoor settings. Because vaccination and mask wearing are currently the best-known methods for preventing the spread of COVID-19, particularly the Delta variant currently prevalent in North America, it is reasonable to state that schools with the most restrictive vaccine requirements are likely the safest. However, students must weigh safety with other priorities, such as access to desirable programs, proximity to home and needed services or medical providers, and other needs.

COVID19's Impact on Attendant Services Programs (ASPs)

Very few institutions publish information on any ASPs offered. For the handful of schools that do, a few featured a working link to a web page discussing ASPs. Others mentioned ASPs in some other document on the website, but either no page featured

details about accessing the programs, or the link to the program was broken. Unfortunately, it seems that Carleton is no longer offering ASPs during the Fall 2021 term: According to The Charlatan, the student newspaper, "current pandemic and safety requirements meant Carleton could not offer the program this fall 'in a safe manner.'" The authors opine that "some Carleton disabled students can't return to campus and student employees who are trained as personal care workers for ASP are losing their jobs."

Student Advocacy Initiatives

Students groups at some Canadian universities are demanding critical access to education, and they have taken to social media and even Change.org to call attention to the issues they are facing. At the University of Victoria, students with disabilities have been told they will be returning to on-campus classes. Unfortunately for many, studying in person will not offer adequate accommodations to ensure that these students have equal access to education, they argue in their Change.org petition. Acknowledging that this issue is not new for students with disabilities, the #Access4All campaign argues that offering online study options will allow students with chronic pain, mobility issues, and other disabilities to thrive.

Further Support and Resources

[Report on the State of Canadian Post-Secondary Education and Accessibility, 2021](#)

[NEADS Campus Disability Services Directory](#)

[COVID-19 Initiatives for People with Disabilities in Post-Secondary Education](#)

disabilityawards.ca - an [online disability scholarships directory](#)

NEADS Social Media: @MyNeads on [Instagram](#) [Twitter](#) [Facebook](#) [LinkedIn](#) [Youtube](#)

Contact NEADS

National Educational Association of Disabled Students

Rm. 514, Unicentre

1125 Colonel By Drive

Ottawa, ON K1S 5B6

Telephone: (613) 380-8065

Toll-Free: (1-877) 670-1256

Fax: (613) 369-4391

Email: info@neads.ca



**National Educational Association
of Disabled Students**
Association nationale des étudiant(e)s
handicapé(e)s au niveau postsecondaire