PICNet
PROVINCIAL INFECTION CONTROL NETWORK OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
A program of the Provincial Health Services Authority

Provincial Health Services Authority

Provincial Infection Prevention and Control Guideline Development Process

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Table of Contents

1 Purpose 3
2 Operational Assumptions and Supporting Resources 3
3 Definitions and Scope 4
4 Guideline Proposal and Priority Setting 4
4.1 Sources of Guideline Proposals 4
4.2 Priority Setting Considerations 4
4.3 Baseline Status and Needs Assessment 5
5 Process Overview 5
6 Methods 6
6.1 Adoption or Adaptation of Existing Guidelines 6
6.2 Development of a New Provincial Guideline 6
6.2.1 Topic Areas With Identified Evidence Gaps 6
6.2.2 Topic Areas Without Identified Evidence Gaps 7
7 Guideline Drafting and Structure 7
7.1.1 Knowledge Translation (KT) Resources 7
7.1.2 Consultation Process 8
7.1.3 Approval 8
7.1.4 Implementation and Publication 8
8 References 9
8.1 Appendix A: Guideline Development Checklist 10

1 Purpose

This document outlines PICNet's standardized process for the development, revision, adoption, or adaptation of provincial infection prevention and control (IPC) guidelines. It is primarily for internal use by PICNet to promote consistency, transparency, and methodological rigour. It will be shared externally as needed, to support understanding of PICNet's approach to guideline development.

PICNet is responsible for supporting multiple provincial IPC guidelines. Given the breadth of this mandate and finite resources, not all guideline requests can be addressed concurrently. Guideline work is therefore prioritized using explicit and transparent criteria, described below, to ensure fair decision-making and alignment with provincial needs.

This process supports the appropriate use of best available evidence – including published research, jurisdictional guidance, and expert input – to produce clear, usable recommendations that address known risks, practice gaps, or variability in IPC practice.

A Guideline Development Checklist is included in Appendix A to support consistent implementation of this process across projects.

2 Operational Assumptions and Supporting Resources

PICNet's guideline development process is designed to support the delivery of high-quality, timely, and evidence-informed guidance. This work is supported by access to appropriate expertise, services, and tools. Resource availability may vary across projects, and guideline development activities are tailored to reflect the scope, complexity, and urgency of each topic.

Human Resources

- Education and Practice expertise to lead IPC content and authorship
- Project coordination capacity to support planning, timelines, and deliverables
- Research and evidence synthesis capacity to support literature review and appraisal
- Subject matter experts (SMEs) to inform relevance, feasibility, and applicability

Services

- PHSA Library Services to provide consultation, design, and conduct literature searches
- Partner engagement mechanisms to support consultation and review
- Communications and knowledge translation support for dissemination and implementation

Tools and Infrastructure

- Screening and data extraction software (e.g., COVIDENCE or equivalent)
- Reference management tools (e.g., Zotero, Mendeley)
- Access to validated appraisal frameworks (e.g., AGREEII, PHAC IPC: critical appraisal tool kit, GRADE, CASP
- Document management and collaboration platforms

PICNet applies this process in a manner that reflects the scope, complexity, and urgency of individual guideline topics.

3 Definitions and Scope

For clarity, this document applies only to IPC guidelines, and not to policies or standards.

- Guidelines: Evidence-informed recommendations intended to support decision-making and promote best practices.
- Policies: Organizational rules or directives
- Standards: Mandatory requirements, often linked to regulation or accreditation.

This document describes a process, not a clinical decision support tool, and does not replace topic-specific methodological guidance used during individual guideline projects.

4 Guideline Proposal and Priority Setting

4.1 Sources of Guideline Proposals

PICNet may receive proposals for guideline development, revision, or adoption/adaptation from:

- PICNet staff
- Provincial Infection Prevention and Control Steering Committee (PIPSC)
- BC Centre for Disease Control (BCCDC)
- BC Ministry of Health
- Office of the Provincial Health Officer
- IPC Community of Practice
- Other provincial or system partners

4.2 Priority Setting Considerations

Decisions regarding whether and when to proceed with guideline work are informed by consultation with relevant partners and leadership. Considerations include:

- Alignment with PICNet's scope, vision, purpose, and values
- Risk and system impact associated with disease, condition, or intervention
- Evidence of practice variability, uncertainty, or lack of consensus
- Urgency due to emerging evidence, system change, or public health need
- Expressed need from partners of the IPC Community of Practice
- Findings from the baseline status and needs assessment (below)

Final decisions to proceed, defer, or decline proposals are made by PICNet leadership and/or PIPSC. Where proposals do not proceed, the rational is communicated to the requestor.

4.3 Baseline Status and Needs Assessment

Before committing to guideline development, PICNet may undertake a baseline status and needs assessment to support informed decision-making.

Activities may include:

- Formal or informal consultation with partners, end users, and SMEs.
- A high-level scoping review of recent jurisdiction or evidence-informed guidance (e.g., Public Health Agency of Canda, World Health Organization, U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention), and systematic reviews (e.g., Cochrane or National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)

Based on the assessment, recommendations are brought forward regarding:

- Whether to proceed with guideline work
- Whether a new guideline, revision, or adoption/adaptation is most appropriate
- Target audience, scope and potential sub-topics
- Key knowledge or practice gaps

5 Process Overview

Once a proposal is approved, the guideline enters the development process. Depending on complexity, a workplan may be developed to outline responsibilities, timelines, and milestones.

While guideline development is iterative, it generally follows this sequence:

Intake -> Needs Assessment -> Decision to Proceed -> Development / Adoption / Adaptation -> Consultation -> Approval -> Implementation and Publication.

6 Methods

PICNet applies an appropriate methodological approach based on topic needs and available evidence.

6.1 Adoption or Adaptation of Existing Guidelines

When suitable guidance already exists, PICNet may adopt or adapt it for provincial use.

Key activities include:

- Identification and retrieval of relevant guidelines
- Appraisal using the Appraisal of Guidelines for Research & Evaluation (AGREE) II tool (or similar) to assess relevance, methodological rigour, and transparency.
- Consultation with partners and SMEs regarding relevance and feasibility.
- Determination of the extent of adoption or adaptation required

Full evidence reviews are not repeated where existing guidance sufficiently addresses the topic.
PICNet team will obtain permissions from other authors/organizations where needed.

6.2 Development of a New Provincial Guideline

When existing guidance is insufficient, outdated, or inappropriate for the BC context, PICNet may develop a new guideline informed by:

- Synthesized primary evidence
- Grey literature
- Selective adaptation of external guidance components, with appropriate appraisal (e.g., using AGREE II or similar) and citation.

6.2.1 Topic Areas With Identified Evidence Gaps

For topics lacking adequate guidance, PICNet may undertake structured evidence review activities, including:

- Development of research questions using the PICO framework *(Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes)*
- Definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Development of search strategies
- Screening and selection of eligible studies
- Data extraction and critical appraisal
- Evidence synthesis and critical appraisal using validated tools (e.g., PHAC toolkit, GRADE, CASP)
- Formulation of evidence-informed recommendations

6.2.2 Topic Areas Without Identified Evidence Gaps

When existing high-quality synthesized evidence or existing guidance adequately addresses a topic, PICNet will use a stream-lined synthesis-based approach rather than conducting a full primary evidence review. This approach supports efficient use of resources while maintaining methodological rigour and supporting timely, evidence-informed guidance. Evidence sources may include systematic reviews, rapid reviews, and evidence-based jurisdictional guidelines.

Key activities include

- Defining focused questions
- Retrieving relevant reviews and guidelines
- Appraising quality using validated tools
- Assessing applicability to the BC context
- Synthesizing findings and formulating recommendations

Where multiple sources exist, priority is given to the most recent and methodologically robust evidence. Rapid reviews are interpreted with consideration of their limitations.

7 Guideline Drafting and Structure

PICNet will:

- Draft and refine guideline content through iterative partner and SME input
- Maintain consistent structure and formatting across guidelines
- Consider inclusion of quality indicators where appropriate
- Integrate diversity, equity, inclusion, and planetary health considerations.

Guidelines will include, as applicable:

- Purpose and scope
- Guideline development process summary
- Land acknowledgement
- Reviewer and contributor acknowledgements

7.1.1 Knowledge Translation (KT) Resources

To support implementation, PICNet may develop KT resources such as summaries, practice tools, and educational materials. These are developed and refined through partner input to support usability and update.

7.1.2 Consultation Process

PICNet engages partners and SMEs throughout guideline development to support relevance, feasibility, credibility, and practical implementation through a practice-focused consultation approach.

Consultation may include representation from:

- BC Ministry of Health
- BCCDC groups (e.g., Primary Care Reference Group, Public Health Lab, Medical Health Officers)
- College of Physicians and Surgeons
- PHSA Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
- Health authority IPC programs
- PHSA Indigenous Health
- Occupational Health and Safety Council
- Patient representatives
- PHSA Patient Experience
- Other relevant partners as appropriate.

Task groups or existing committees may be used. For new task groups, Terms of Reference will be established prior to consultation and collaboration.

7.1.3 Approval

PICNet will submit the final guideline and KT resources for approval to:

- Relevant task/working groups or committees
- PICNet Leadership
- PIPSC

Additional approvals (e.g., BC Ministry of Health, Office of the Provincial Health Officer, BCCDC Communicable Diseases Policy Committee) may be required depending on the topic, sponsor, or system implications.

7.1.4 Implementation and Publication

PICNet will:

- Develop a communication plan in collaboration with PHSA Communications
- Coordinate publication on the PICNet website and other appropriate venues
- Notify partners and the IPC Community of Practice through newsletters or targeted communications of new or updated guidance.

8 References

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8.1 Appendix A: Guideline Development Checklist

This checklist supports PICNet team members in following the standardized process for developing, revising, or adopting IPC guidelines.

Task	✓	Date Completed	Comments
1. Guideline Proposal & Priority Setting			
Proposal received and reviewed	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Confirm alignment with PICNet's scope, and definitions (guideline vs. policy/standard)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Assess urgency, system impact, and practice variability	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Identify risks, uncertainly or high-impact IPC issues	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Conduct baseline status and needs assessment (see section 2)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Conduct preliminary feasibility (resources/capacity)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
PICNet Leadership and/or PIPSC approval to proceed, defer, or decline decision documented and communicated	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
2. Baseline Status & Needs Assessment			
Conduct partners/end users/SMEs consultation/survey (formal or informal)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Conduct initial scoping review (jurisdictional guidelines, systematic review, Cochrane, etc.)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Identify knowledge or practice gaps	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Identify target audience(s)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Define scope and sub-topics	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Identify potential research questions (if applicable)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Determine approach: new vs. revision vs. adoption/adaptation	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Prepare recommendation summary for PICNet leadership/PIPSC	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Document decision confirmed to proceed with approach	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
3. Process Planning and Resourcing			
Develop project workplan (timelines, milestones, deliverables)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Identify needed resources	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Determine partner and SME engagement strategy (e.g., task group or existing committee)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Develop Terms of Reference (if new task group)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
4. Method Selection and Evidence Approach			
A. Adoption/Adaptation			
Retrieve relevant existing jurisdictional guidelines	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	

Task	✓	Date Completed	Comments
Appraise using AGREE II or similar tool	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Assess applicability to BC context	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Determine extent of adoption/adaptation	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Consult partners and SMEs for relevance/feasibility	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Obtain permissions if required	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
B. New Guideline Development			
Define approach (primary evidence, grey literature, partial adaptation)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Identify need for structured evidence review vs. synthesis of external guideline components	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Appraise any incorporated external guidance	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
5. Sub-topic Evidence Review			
If Evidence Gaps identified (full evidence review):			
Develop PICO questions (with SME input)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Define inclusion/exclusion criteria	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Work with Library Services on search strategy	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Screen and select eligible studies	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Extract, synthesize, and critically appraise evidence using validated tools (PHAC toolkit, GRADE, CASP)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Draft evidence-informed recommendations	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
If No Evidence Gaps Exist (existing synthesized evidence sufficient):			
Define research questions	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Request Library Services support to retrieve systematic reviews, rapid reviews, and jurisdictional guidelines	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Prioritize and select most recent and relevant sources	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Appraise quality using validated tools (e.g., AGREE II, AMSTAR)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Assess applicability to BC context (feasibility, implementation considerations)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Synthesize findings across sources and document limitations	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Draft contextualized recommendations	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
6. Guideline Structure & Drafting			
Draft guideline sections using standardized structure	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Conduct iterative review with partner and SMEs	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	

Task	✓	Date Completed	Comments
Consider potential quality indicators	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Integrate DEI and planetary health considerations	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Include required supplemental sections:	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• Land acknowledgement	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• Reviewer table	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• Contributor acknowledgement	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• Guideline development process	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• Purpose & scope	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
7. Knowledge Translation (KT) Resources			
Identify KT needs (summaries, tools, education materials)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Develop draft KT resources	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Conduct iterative partner review and refinement	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
8. Consultation Process			
Identify and engage relevant partners and SMEs	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Create task group or use existing working group	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Document feedback and responses	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Revised guideline and KT resources based on input	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
9. Approval			
Submit guideline and KT products to:			
• Task/working group/committee	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• PICNet Leadership	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• PIPSC	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
• Any additional required approvals (e.g., BC MoH, BCCDC Committees etc.)	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Document final approval	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
10. Implementation & Publication			
Develop communication plan with PHSA Communications	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Coordinate publication on PICNet website or other required venues	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	
Release PICNet Newsletter or equivalent communication to relevant partners and Community of Practice	☐	Click or tap to enter a date.	