

Ministry of Health

# COVID-19 Guidance: Emergency Childcare Centres

Version 1, March 29, 2020

**In order to support health care and frontline workers during the COVID-19 pandemic, certain childcare centres are exempt from the order to close all licensed childcare centres, pursuant to the emergency declared in Ontario on March 17, 2020.**

These childcare centres are required to follow all existing health and safety requirements as directed by the local medical officer of health and as outlined in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* and other policies and guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education. Plans must also be in place to respond should any staff, children, or parents/guardians be exposed to COVID-19.

## Requirements for health and safety

1. Ensure all current infection prevention and control practices are adhered to, this includes but is not limited to:
  - Ensuring all toys used at the centre are made of material that can be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. avoid plush toys);
  - Increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting objects, toys and frequently touched surfaces;
  - Frequently touched surfaces are most likely to become contaminated, including doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, and tabletops, and must be disinfected at least twice a day;
  - Only using disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). Low-level hospital grade disinfectants may be used;

- Checking expiry dates of products used and always following manufacturer's instructions;
  - Performing proper hand hygiene (including assisting children with hand hygiene); and,
  - Incorporating additional hand hygiene opportunities into the daily schedule.
2. Encourage more physical space between children by:
    - Spreading children out into different areas;
    - Staggering, or alternating, lunchtime and outdoor playtime; and,
    - Incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children.
  3. Do not use water or sensory tables.
  4. Do not use community playgrounds; however outdoor play at licensed childcare sites is encouraged in small groups in order to encourage physical distancing (check with the local public health unit regarding the use of playground equipment on site).
  5. Increase the distance between nap mats, if possible. If space is tight, place children head-to-toe or toe-to-toe. Cots and cribs should be disinfected after each use. Please refer to section 4 of the [Ontario Child Care Centre Licensing Manual](#) (September 2019) for more information.
  6. Linens must be laundered between children.
  7. Children must not share soothers, bottles, sippy cups, toothbrushes, facecloths, etc. Label these items with the child's name to discourage accidental sharing.
  8. Reinforce "no food sharing" policies.
  9. If meals or snacks are provided, ensure each child has their own individual meal or snack. Multi-use utensils must be sanitized.
  10. Pick-up and drop-off of children should happen outside the childcare setting unless it is determined that there is a need for the parent/guardian to enter the setting.
  11. When holding infants and toddlers, use blankets or cloths over childcare providers clothing and change the blankets or cloths between children.
  12. Avoid getting close to faces of all children, where possible.
  13. Clearly communicate to parents/guardians:
    - check their children's temperature and ask staff to check their own temperature daily before coming to the childcare setting.

- If the temperature is equal or greater than 38 degrees Celsius or if the child/children have any cold-like symptoms or vomiting and/or diarrhea, they should stay home.

14. More information on self-monitoring can be found on [Public Health Ontario's website](#).

## Screening

15. All individuals, including children, parents/guardians and staff must be screened upon arrival using the criteria below. Deny entry to any person including the child of a parent/guardian who meets the following criteria:
- Signs or symptoms of respiratory infection, such as cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, and/or fever.
  - Anyone who have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days.
16. Thermometers must not be used between children/staff without single-use protective covers or disinfecting between use.
17. Do not permit children who are ill to attend childcare.
18. Childcare centres must have protocols in place to notify parents/guardians if their child begins to show symptoms of COVID-19 while in childcare, including the need for immediate pick up.

## Management of children with possible COVID-19

19. If a child begins to experience symptoms of COVID-19 while attending childcare, it is recommended that:
- Symptomatic children are immediately separated from others in a supervised area until they can go home. In addition, where possible, anyone who is providing care to the child should maintain a distance of 2 metres.
  - If a 2-metre distance cannot be maintained from the ill child, advice from the local public health unit will be necessary to prevent/limit virus transmission to those providing care.
    - While contacting the public health unit, at minimum the child and childcare worker should wear a surgical / procedure mask (if tolerated).

- Hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be practiced while the child is waiting to be picked up.
- Tissues should be provided to the child for proper respiratory etiquette, with proper disposal of the tissues and proper hand hygiene.
- Environmental cleaning of the space the child was separated should be conducted once the child has been picked up.
- Contact the local public health unit to notify them of a potential case and seek input regarding the information that should be shared with other parents of children in the childcare centre.
- Children with symptoms must be excluded from childcare for 14 days after the onset of symptoms.
- Children or staff who have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 or symptomatic person(s), should be excluded from the childcare setting for 14 days.

## Occupational Health & Safety

11. Childcare centres must have written measures and procedures for worker safety, including measures and procedures for infection prevention and control. Detailed guidelines for COVID-19 are available on the Ministry of Health [COVID-19 website](#).
12. If a childcare worker is suspected to have or diagnosed with COVID-19, the childcare worker must remain off work until symptoms are fully resolved and negative laboratory tests have been confirmed.
13. The employer should consult with the local public health unit to determine when the care provider can return to work. Childcare workers should also report to their Employee Health/Occupational Health and Safety department prior to return to work.
14. If the care provider's illness is determined to be work-related: In accordance with the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations, an employer must provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a worker has an occupational illness, including an occupationally-acquired infection, or if a claim has been made to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB) by or on behalf of the worker with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:

- a. Ministry of Labour;
  - b. Joint health and safety committee (or health and safety representative); and
  - c. Trade union, if any.
15. Any instances of occupationally acquired infection shall be reported to WSIB within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.