

COVID-19 (Novel Coronavirus) Child Care for Essential Workers

Guidance for Emergency Child Care Centres for Essential Workers

May 11, 2020

Updated with the revised Ministry of Health Guidelines for Emergency Child Care Centres

This guidance provides basic information only. It is not intended to take the place of medical advice, diagnosis, treatment or legal advice.

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 outlined in the Occupational Health and Safety Act and its regulations, as directed in this document by Dr. Joyce Lock, 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 infection prevention and control practices are adhered to including but 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)

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- Incorporating additional hand hygiene opportunities into the daily schedule.
2. Ensure 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 facilities is encouraged in small groups in order to encourage physical distancing. (check to see if the Province has lifted orders on the closure of outdoor playgrounds by visiting [Ontario.ca](https://www.ontario.ca))
 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](#) 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 prevent 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 (i.e., no family style serving at this time). Multi-use utensils must be sanitized.
 10. Pick-up and drop-off of children should occur outside the childcare facility unless it is determined that there is a need for the parent/guardian to enter the setting.
 11. When holding infants or 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.

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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 37.8 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 www.swpublichealth.ca

Screening

15. All individuals, including children, parents/guardians and staff must be screened upon arrival. Deny entry to any person including the child of a parent/guardian who has any of the symptoms outlined in the COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 [website](#). Children in particular should be monitored for atypical symptoms and signs of COVID-19. (see Appendix A for May 2nd version of Reference Document for Symptoms and check the Ministry of Health website for more recent versions issued)
16. Thermometers must not be used between children/staff without single-use protective covers or disinfecting between use.
16. Screeners should take appropriate precautions when screening, including maintaining a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) from those being screened, or being separated by a physical barrier (such as a plexiglass barrier), and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e. surgical/procedure mask, gown, gloves, eye protection (goggles or face shield)).
17. Childcare centres within the meaning of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, have a duty to report suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 under the *Health Protection and Promotion Act*. The centre should contact Southwestern Public Health to report a child suspected to have COVID-19. Southwestern Public Health will provide specific advice on what control measures should be implemented to prevent the potential spread and how to monitor for other possible infected staff members and children.
18. Thermometers must not be used between children/staff without single-use protective covers or disinfecting between use.
19. Do not permit children who are ill to attend the childcare centre. (see point above)

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20. 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.

21. For home-based childcare: if a person who resides in the home becomes symptomatic and/or tests positive for COVID-19, the home-based childcare centre should not operate until clearance is received from Southwestern Public Health.

Management of Children with Possible COVID-19

22. 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. Plan in advance where this space will be. In addition, where possible, anyone who is providing care to the child should maintain a distance of 2 metres. It is recognized that young children usually want to be held and comforted when ill. Older children may be fine with keeping a distance between themselves and the childcare worker.
- If keeping a physical distance of 2 metres between the childcare worker/staff and the ill child is difficult or cannot be maintained, advice from Southwestern Public Health will be necessary to prevent/limit virus transmission to those providing care.
- Contact Southwestern Public Health COVID-19 Call Centre at 1-800-922-0096 ext.9 to notify them of a potential case and seek advice regarding the information that should be shared with other parents/guardians of children in the childcare centre.
- While contacting Southwestern Public Health, at a minimum the child and childcare worker should wear a surgical / procedure mask (if tolerated, masks are not recommended for children under age 2) and any other PPE appropriate for the circumstance. Note that procuring a supply of masks in advance will be needed.
- 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 where the child was separated should be conducted once the child has been picked up.
- Children with symptoms should be tested.
- Other children and staff in the centre who were present while a child or staff member became ill should be identified as a close contact and cohorted (i.e. grouped together).

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Southwestern Public Health will provide any further direction on testing and isolation of these close contacts.

- Children or staff who have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19 should be excluded from the childcare setting for 14 days.

Testing for COVID-19

23. Symptomatic staff and children should be referred for testing. Testing of asymptomatic persons should only be performed as directed by Southwestern Public Health as part of outbreak management. A list of symptoms, including atypical signs and symptoms, can be found in the COVID-19 [Reference Document for Symptoms](#) on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 website. (See Appendix A for May 2nd version).

- Those who test negative for COVID-19 must be excluded until 24 hours after symptom resolution (symptoms go away).
- Those who test positive for COVID-19 must be excluded from childcare centre for 14 days after the onset of symptoms and clearance has been received from Southwestern Public Health.

24. Emergency childcare centres must consider a single, symptomatic, laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in a staff member or child as a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak in consultation with Southwestern Public Health. Outbreaks should be declared in collaboration between the centre and Southwestern Public Health to ensure an outbreak number if provided.

25. Children or staff who have been in contact with a suspected COVID-19 case should be monitored for symptoms and cohorted (i.e. grouped together) until laboratory tests, if any, have been completed or until directed by the local public health unit.

26. Staff members awaiting test results, who are asymptomatic, may continue to work unless there is reason to believe they would be considered a case (e.g. potential exposure to an ill or positive case or household contact). Staff should also monitor for symptoms while waiting for test results; if they become symptomatic, they should be excluded from work.

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Occupational Health and Safety

27. Childcare centres must have written measures and procedures for staff safety, including measures and procedures for infection prevention and control. Detailed guidelines for COVID-19 are available on the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 website](#).

28. If a staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, the staff member must remain off work for 14 days following symptom onset and has received clearance from Southwestern Public Health.

29. The employer should consult with Southwestern Public Health to determine when the staff member can return to work. Staff members should also report to their Employee Health/Occupational Health and Safety department prior to return to work.

30. If the staff member's illness is determined to be work-related: in accordance with the *Occupational Health and Safety Act* and its regulations, the employer must provide a written notice within four days of being advised that a staff member 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 staff member with respect to an occupational illness, including an occupational infection, to the:

- a) Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development
- b) Joint Health and Safety Committee (or health and safety representative)
- c) Trade union, if any.

31. Any instances of occupationally acquired infection should be reported to WSIB within 72 hours of receiving notification of said illness.

Appendix A

[Reference Document for Symptoms](#)