

GUIDANCE FOR PRESCHOOL, DAY CARE AND OUT OF SCHOOL CARE (CHILD CARE)

Overview

By implementing good public health practices, businesses and entities can reduce transmission of infections such as COVID-19, influenza, common colds and norovirus (a common germ that causes diarrhea and vomiting). All businesses and entities should promote all staff, volunteers and attendees and other eligible persons to be fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccine as well as supporting good public health practices such as:

- implementing practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infections among attendees and staff, such as staying home when sick, washing or sanitizing your hands often and practicing good respiratory etiquette;
- providing procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- maintaining high levels of cleaning and disinfection; and
- complying, to the extent possible, with any applicable Alberta Health guidance found at on the COVID-19 info for Albertans [website](#).

The COVID-19 vaccine was approved for children aged 5 to 11 years of age in November 2021. There is currently no COVID-19 vaccine available for children aged 4 years and under. To support ongoing safe operations, Operators should follow this guidance and the [General Guidance for COVID-19 and other Respiratory Illnesses](#). All Albertans are required to follow all applicable Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Orders, including the continued requirement for isolation.

This document has been revised to support operators of licensed preschools and child care centres in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19, including the more transmissible Omicron variant, as well as other infections among attendees (children, adolescents, adults, parents, guardians, staff and volunteers). This guidance builds upon the [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) Health and Safety Child Care Guidelines](#). All licensed preschools and child care centres are also required to be in compliance with applicable zoning and health and safety legislation, including the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and the [Early Learning and Child Care Regulation](#).

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance

- Operators are encouraged to review and follow the [General Guidance for COVID-19 and other Respiratory Illnesses](#).
- Operators should notify families of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures.
- Where possible, practices that encourage spacing should occur, for example:
 - Consider activities that reduce close contact with others.
 - Plan for spaced activities.
 - Consider ways to set up rooms to avoid clustering or congested areas.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> HVAC systems should be maintained in accordance with manufacturer operational guidelines. For more information on building ventilation, please refer to the General Guidance. If the use of portable air purifiers with HEPA filters is being considered, they should be used in combination with established public health measures, considering the impact they may have on overall indoor air quality and ventilation, and only in situations where enhancing natural or mechanical ventilation is not possible. If used, air purifiers should be large enough for the size of the room or area where they are being used.
Screening and Response Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff, parents/guardians and children must not enter the space if they are not feeling well or have COVID-19 symptoms. Fully vaccinated¹ individuals are legally required to isolate at home for a minimum of 5 days if they have tested positive or have any core symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. If no longer symptomatic at 5 days, they can discontinue their isolation on day 6 or later. They must continue to mask in all public spaces up until 10 days have passed since the start of their COVID-19 symptoms or, if asymptomatic, the date when they took the first COVID-19 test. It is recommended that Albertans continue to limit their contacts during this period as much as possible. Individuals who are not fully vaccinated are legally required to isolate for 10 days if they have tested positive or have any core symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Although close contacts of positive cases are no longer legally required to quarantine, it is strongly recommended that all unvaccinated household contacts of a person infected with COVID-19 stay home for 10 days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A household contact is defined as a person who lives in the same residence as the case OR who has been in frequent, long-duration, close-range interaction with the person who tested positive. This definition would include unvaccinated childcare staff who provide direct care for children requiring staff to be within 2 meters or 6 feet who are unable to implement good standards of respiratory hygiene (e.g., unable to perform appropriate hand washing, covering coughs/sneezes, using and disposing of tissues). NOTE: A close contact who has tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 90 days AND is currently asymptomatic, can attend school,

¹ A person who has received the complete vaccine series for COVID-19 and it has been 14 days after the second dose in a two dose series, or one dose in a one dose series (i.e., Janssen vaccine for adults only)

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	<p>work, childcare and/or other activities, independent of vaccine status.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before leaving home, staff and children who will access the child care, are encouraged to self-screen or be screened by a parent/guardian for symptoms each day that they enter the centre using the applicable checklist for their age group (Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist or Adult Alberta Health Daily Checklist). ○ The child care centre should ask parents/guardians if the child is feeling well. ○ Parents/guardians should be provided a copy of the Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist upon registration. ○ Operators are encouraged to set an expectation with parents/guardians that the checklist should be completed on a daily basis. • If a child develops symptoms while at the facility or on a field trip, the child should be isolated in a separate room and the parent/guardian should be notified to come and pick up the child immediately. If a separate room is not available, the child should be kept at least 2 metres away from other children. If child is safely able to mask, masking is recommended. • If the child is young and requires close contact and care, staff can continue to care for the child until the parent/guardian is able to pick-up the child. Staff should wear a well fitting medical mask or a seal-checked KN95 mask, gloves, a gown and eye protection during all interactions with the child and should avoid contact with the child's respiratory secretions. Hand washing before, after and during care is highly recommended in addition to, or as an alternative to, gloves if not worn. • Staff should wash their hands before donning a mask and before and after removing the mask (as per Alberta Health mask guidance), and before and after touching any items used by the child. • All items, such as bedding, toys etc., used by the child in the 48 hours prior to the onset of their symptoms and while isolated should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child has been picked up. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. paper, books, cardboard puzzles, etc.) should be removed from the centre and stored for a minimum of 24 hours. • Anyone that reports symptoms should be directed to stay home, use a rapid test if available (please note that home rapid tests should not be used in children under 2 years²), seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g., call Health Link 811, or their primary health care practitioner, or 911 for
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² NOTE: Children 2 years of age and younger who are not eligible for rapid testing should complete the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#) to access lab-PCR testing

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	<p>emergency response), and refer to the AHS Online Self-Assessment tool for additional instructions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proof of a negative COVID-19 test result is not necessary to return to child care. • Programs should keep records of children's known pre-existing conditions. If a child develops symptoms that could be caused by either COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g., allergies), the child should be tested at least once for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to child care. This will be considered the child's baseline health. • Written confirmation by a physician that a child or staff member's symptoms are due to a chronic illness is not necessary. Repeat testing is not necessary unless the nature of the symptom changes (e.g., a chronic cough worsens). • The AHS Coordinated Early Identification and Response (CEIR) team is available to all child care settings at 1-844-343-0971. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Sites are not required to report COVID-19/respiratory illness or suspect outbreaks to CEIR at this time as COVID-19/respiratory outbreaks will not be opened. ○ Sites are encouraged to continue to monitor for gastrointestinal, rash, and other non-respiratory/non-COVID illness clusters and contact the CEIR team to report these clusters of illness. ○ Sites requiring additional guidance and decision-making support for the application of recommended COVID-19 infection control or isolation/quarantine guidance in this document can continue to call CEIR.
Expectations for Drop-off/Pick-up and Entry Areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs can consider implementing procedures for drop off and pick up that reduce congestion to the greatest extent possible. Possible strategies include separate entrances, having one designated parent/guardian pick up and drop off each child, staggering entry, or limiting the number of people in entry areas. • Program attendance needs to be reported monthly to the Ministry of Children's Services.
Hand Hygiene	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand sanitizer should be placed in convenient locations throughout the centre, but be kept out of reach of unsupervised children. • Child care programs must adhere to handwashing guidelines outlined in the AHS Health and Safety Guidelines Child Care Guidelines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol is recommended as there is evidence that it reduces the risk of transmission of COVID-19.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hand sanitizer can help reduce the risk of infection by or the spread of microorganisms when hand washing is not possible. ○ If parents/guardians have questions about their child using alcohol-based hand sanitizer they should contact the operator to discuss potential alternatives.
Additional Public Health Measures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program staff who prefer to wear a mask while at work should be supported to do so. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Masks should be well-constructed, well-fitted and properly worn. ○ Non-medical masks should be constructed of at least three layers: two of breathable tightly woven fabric, such as cotton, and an additional effective middle filter layer, such as non-woven polypropylene. ○ Medical masks are another option for staff and children to provide additional protection. ○ If KN95 masks are used, they should be seal checked each time they are donned. ○ Once a disposable mask, gown, eye protection or gloves have been removed, they should be thrown in a lined trash bin or if reusable, place in a sealed container to be cleaned. • Children attending a child care program are not required to wear a mask while at child care but should be supported to wear one if their parent/guardian prefers.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators are expected to follow provincial masking laws if using public transit. • If a child becomes symptomatic during a trip, a mask should be made available. The driver should contact the program to make the appropriate arrangements for the child to be picked up. • Vehicle cleaning and records: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ It is recommended that there be increased frequency of cleaning and disinfection of applicable high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, child seats, window areas, rails, steering wheel, mobile devices and GPS. ○ It is recommended that vehicle cleaning logs be kept.
Out of School Care Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the instance that a child arrives at the child care program directly after attending school (for which the child was assessed for symptoms by a parent/guardian before attending), program staff may assess the child to see if they are feeling well.
Use of Shared Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs that utilize a space that has other after-hours user groups (e.g., programs in churches, community centres) may want to ensure that the

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	space is cleaned before and after using the space. A cleaning log should be posted and used to track cleaning.
Cleaning and Disinfecting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs should engage in frequent, thorough cleaning and disinfecting. • Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, including diapering areas, as per AHS' COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities. • Cleaning and disinfecting of toys should be done by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Commercial dishwasher <p>OR</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Wash with detergent and water; ▪ Rinse with clean, warm water; ▪ Wipe, spray or immerse for two minutes in an approved disinfectant; and, ▪ Air dry. • Regarding items that travel with the child from home to the child care centre on a daily or regular basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If coat hooks, lockers or open cubbies are to be used to store personal items, program operators may want to consider assigning each to a single child or ensuring that they are cleaned and disinfected in between uses. ○ Equipment that is required for children's day-to-day use (e.g., mobility or feeding devices, weighted blankets, headphones) should be cleaned and disinfected at drop off and pick up, and should not be used by anyone other than the child.
Overnight Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before offering overnight care, operators should consult with Children's Services and Alberta Health Services to assess respiratory illness risk specific to their overnight program and collectively determine if additional measures are needed to minimize risk of transmission during overnight care.
Other resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information regarding COVID-19 (Government of Alberta) www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx • How to hand wash (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-flu-handwash-how-to.pdf • How to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-flu-hand-rub-how-to.pdf

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Diapering procedures poster (AHS)
https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eph-diapering-procedure-poster.pdf• Hand washing posters (AHS)
https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-you-d-clean-em.pdf
https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-you-d-clean-em-2.pdf• Arts and crafts safety (AHS)
https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-arts-crafts-safety.pdf |
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This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Last Revised: March 2022