

COVID-19 POLICY

The intent of this policy is to set out expectations and guidance for staff and families during COVID-19 as child care transitions to a more normal learning environment while maintaining protective measures outlined in the Ministry of Education.

Additional confirmation has been provided indicating that the ministry (March 21, 2022) has amended related requirements set out in regulations as follows:

- Part IV.1- Special Rules Relating to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) of Ontario Regulation 137/15 is revoked, which included:
 - Active screening requirements
 - Records related to visitors
 - Physical distancing and separation of groups
 - COVID-19 policy requirements
 - Historical COVID-19 requirements

Fort Erie Co-operative Preschool will continue to follow COVID-19 policies, procedures and guidelines as contained in this document. This includes daily COVID-19 screening, mandatory mask wearing and physical distancing practices that are currently in place in all Regional facilities.

Definition

Order: Orders contain legal requirements that are required to be followed by child care centres when implemented by local public health units.

Recommendation: gives child care centres the opportunity to follow different direction from what has been provided by local public health units.

POLICY

Protocols

- Covid-19 Child Care Centre Operations
- Covid-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting
- Covid-19 Illness and Exposure

Memorandum

- Ministry of Education Update: Lifting of Health and Safety Measures in Child Care (August 16, 2022)
- Masking Recommendation, Updated Self-Isolation Guidance, Pandemic Response Division, NRPH (March 14, 2022)

Appendixes

- A: Covid -19 Visitor Log
- B: Covid -19 Pandemic Custodian Daily Checklist
- C: Covid-19 Disinfecting Log

Health Screen Checks

- Families and staff are asked to use the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Schools and Child Care Settings prior to attending programs. On-site daily screening is no longer required; however, when needed, electronic COVID-19 screening can be used by children/staff/visitors that have smart devices.
- The electronic screening option complies with the Ministry of Health's recommended set of health screening questions for school and child care.
- The province will continue to provide a screening tool for use by schools and child care, which may be periodically updated. All individuals must follow the monitoring and isolation guidance advice outlined in the screening tool, including all direction from Niagara Region Public Health.
- Screening can be completed prior to children/staff/visitors arriving at the child care centre.
- Hard copy screens will be available at the child care centre in the event of children arriving ill.
- Retention of Health Screen Checks are no longer required to be retained in hard copy form on site, as advised by the Ministry of Education. This aligns with the Province of Ontario's COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool process.

2. COVID-19 CHILD CARE CENTRE OPERATIONS PROTOCOL

These operational measures are required in order to safely support child care.

Definitions:

CCEYA: *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*

PPE: Personal Protective Equipment

NRPH: Niagara Region Public Health Unit

RECE: Registered Early Childhood Educator

Staffing

- Child care settings are permitted to operate with maximum group sizes as set out under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014, (CCEYA)*.
- Children are permitted to attend on a part time basis, and as with children attending full time. Groups are permitted to return to the previous maximum group size under the CCEYA (maximum group size prior to COVID-19).
- Resource Consultants must wear medical masks (PPE) while in the child care centre and must maintain physical distance of 2 meters from children whenever possible.
- Room licensing and ratios expectations must be maintained as set out in the CCEYA.

Staff Schedules

- Supervisors and Lead RECEs will schedule breaks and lunches in a staggered format, ensuring that lesser number of staff are breaking in the staff room at one time. This ensures adequate room for physical distancing, 2 metre distance, in staff rooms.

Screening Area/Staff

- When adults are required to enter the child care centre into the screening area (including parents dropping off/picking up children), they are no longer required to wear masks or face covering.
- All other adults (i.e. parents/guardians, and visitors) are subject to all health and safety protocols listed in this document, while inside the premises.
- All areas **past** the screening area will be designated as the “child care centre” for staff/students
- PPE must be properly and safely stored and readily accessible. All donning and doffing procedures must be followed as well, including hand hygiene prior to donning and after doffing a mask.
- All entrances should have alcohol-based hand rub with a concentration of 60-90% (best practice is at least 70%) available with signage demonstrating appropriate use.

Alcohol based hand rub should not be accessible to children (i.e. not within their reach) and children should be supervised when using the hand rub.

Visitors/Students/Attendance

- Visitors (those who are providing a service to the centre) are permitted into the to the child care centre and are subject to the health and safety protocols (screening/PPE). As a best practice, the number of visitors indoors should be limited to the ability to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres
- Families will not be permitted into the child care centre unless there are extenuating circumstances
Families will continue to follow current health and safety measures, releasing/pick up of their child/ren in the screening area, class door or playground gate
- If access to the CCC is required, parents should not be permitted past the screening area unless a child is having separation anxieties. In the event that a parent is required to enter the program, a Health Care Screen must be completed on the parent
- Be sure that your visitors are recorded in the visitor section of the Daily Log Journal. These records must include the name, contact information, time of arrival and departure, screening completion/results of the visitor
- For the purpose of contact tracing and case management, Children’s Monthly Attendance may be reviewed as required by NRPH
- Completed Monthly Children’s Attendances will be stored in the supervisor office
- The records are to be maintained on site or electronically
- Orientations/ meetings with families will take place virtually or via telephone. Exceptions may be made for individual requests (tour of the child care centre)
- Students on educational placement will be required to follow all COVID-19 policy and protocols

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are among the most important protective strategies.
- Staff and students on an educational placement should be trained and able to assist children on appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, including the use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR), and reinforcing its use.
- Anyone entering the centre must sanitize their hands with Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR) or complete hand washing. Niagara Region Public Health expectation is at least 60-90% alcohol (minimum 70% is preferred).

- Hand hygiene will be incorporated into the daily schedule at regular intervals during the day, above and beyond what is usually recommended (before eating food, after using the washroom)
- For children and staff this may include but be not limited to:
 - Upon entering the child care centre
 - Upon entering the playroom
 - Upon entering the staff room
 - Upon entering the centre from the playground
 - Before and after use of sensory materials
 - At any time it is observed that a child has put their hands on their mouth/nose.
- Age-appropriate posters or signage should be placed around the child care centre see [NR COVID-19 Posters and Resources](#) for hand hygiene posters.
- Soap and water are preferred as the most effective method and least likely to cause harm if accidentally ingested.
- ABHR can be used by children. It is most effective when hands are not visibly soiled.
- For any dirt, blood, body fluids (urine/feces), it is preferred that hands be washed with soap and water.
- Safe placement of the ABHR to avoid consumption is important, especially for young children.
- Support or modifications should be provided to allow children with special needs to regularly perform hand hygiene as independently as possible.
- Tissues and lined, no-touch waste baskets (for example, foot pedal-operated, hand sensor, open basket) are to be provided, where possible.
- ABHR should be located at the entry point to each child care room and/or plain liquid soap in dispensers, sinks and paper towel dispensers.

Refer to Public Health Ontario's How to Wash Your Hands (PDF) fact sheet and respiratory etiquette infographic.

Refer to Health Canada's Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers (COVID-19): List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada, including which sanitizers may be appropriate for different groups of staff and students.

[List of Hand Sanitizers](#)

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- The use of medical/N95 masks is optional; they will be provided to any staff member that requests them.
- Staff always have access to an additional supply of masks in the event their masks become contaminated, dropped, break etc.
- PPE must be properly and safely stored and readily accessible in the event that an interaction with a child or staff is immediately required. All donning and doffing procedures must be followed as well including hand hygiene prior to donning and after doffing a mask.

Guidance on the Use of N95 Masks

Replacing a mask is driven by factors including but not limited to:

- When it is no longer tolerated or accepted;
- When the filtering part of the mask is wet;
- When the mask has lost some of its integrity: relaxed elastic, damaged filtering part; and
- When there were potentially infectious droplets splashing onto the mask.
- When caring for a sick child or a child showing symptoms of illness.

Please be advised that to further protect the longevity of the non-fit-tested N95 masks, these masks should be restricted to indoor use. If wearing a mask while outside, staff/providers should switch to a medical/surgical mask.

Donning and Doffing Medical Masks

- **Staff must follow proper donning, doffing and storage procedures each time the mask is removed.** This includes but not limited to:
 - Washing or sanitizing hands prior to putting mask on.
 - Washing or sanitizing your hands immediately after taking mask off.
 - Masks must be stored in a plastic container with a lid.
 - Remove mask by only touching the ear loops.
 - Place the mask in the centre of a clean plastic container.
 - Ear loops will hang over the outside of the container.
 - The lid will be placed on until staff ready to don the mask.
 - All containers must be labelled with name and cleaned and disinfected frequently (i.e., after use).
 - Masks must not be stored on your person (i.e., pockets) or on other surfaces (i.e., staff room table).
 - Dispose mask in a closed bin/garbage.
 - Do not put the mask on around your neck or up on your forehead.
 - Do not touch the outside of your mask and if you do, wash or sanitize your hands immediately.
 - If mask becomes wet or visibly soiled, it will need to be replaced.

Environmental Health Information line will answer questions regarding process for storage by calling 905-688-8248 ext. 7590 or [Email Environmental Health](#).

Niagara Region Public Health Re-opening Child Care Centres During COVID-19 support:

- [Public Health Recommended Steps for PPE](#).

Schools, Child Care Centres, Licensed Home Child Care Programs, and Camps During COVID-19 - Niagara Region, Ontario

- When wearing masks:
 - Follow the Niagara Region Fact sheet for donning and doffing a mask/face covering and for proper procedure. “COVID-19 Face Coverings for Non-healthcare Workers”, see link below as well as proper hand hygiene.
 - Staff will read fact sheets and watch videos to ensure proper use.

***** Child Care centres should secure and sustain an amount of PPE (including but not limited to medical/N95 masks, gloves etc.) and cleaning supplies that can support their current and ongoing operations.**

Gowns

- Disposable gowns or cloth smocks, as well as N95 masks and eye protection, are required when assisting ill children when 2 meters physical distancing can't be maintained.
- Disposable gowns are to be discarded immediately after use.
- Smocks are to be laundered in hot water and placed in a high heat dryer immediately after each use. Be sure that soiled laundry is maintained in a specific area to lessen the risk of possible contamination across multiple surfaces and best practice is to launder immediately whenever possible.
- Ensure that smocks are properly stored in a sealed container to limit the possibility of contamination.
- Emergency containers with a supply of PPE items required in the event that an individual becomes ill, should be readily available containing: one lab coat or disposable gown (if able), medical mask, gloves, eye protection, with facial tissues (Kleenex) and ABHR accessible in the immediate area that care is taking place . This will ensure quick and timely access to required PPE and immediate access if eye protection or medical mask become soiled during the 1:1 care of the ill individual.

Ventilation (for additional information see Niagara Specific Guidance for COVID-19 in the School and Childcare Settings included in the protocols).

- Adequate ventilation should be provided by opening windows, moving activities outdoors when possible, and through mechanical ventilation including HVAC systems.
- Heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVACs) and their filters are designed to reduce airborne pollutants, including virus particles, when they circulate through the system.
 - Ensure HVAC systems are in good working condition.
 - Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
 - Arrange furniture away from air vents and high airflow areas.
 - Avoid re-circulating air.
- Ensure that the HVAC units are routinely maintained/serviced by a HVAC professional and that records of all maintenance is kept on site.

Ventilation is important, it must be used along with other public health measures. There is not one public health measure that can guarantee protection from COVID-19.

3. COVID-19 ILLNESS/EXPOSURE PROTOCOL

Definitions

SO: Serious Occurrence

CCLS: Child Care Licencing System

MEDU: Ministry of Education

NRPH: Niagara Region Public Health

Definitions:

- Active Screening:** means that the child care centre is responsible to ensure that no individuals enter the premises unless it is confirmed that they have completed the screening and the result indicates that they are allowed to enter.
- Fully vaccinated:** equal to or more than 14 days after receiving their second dose of a two-dose COVID-19 vaccine series, or their first dose of a one-dose COVID-19 series.
- Isolation:** Occurs with the onset of possible COVID-19 symptoms, or a positive COVID-19 test result.

Procedure:

If an individual has COVID-19 symptoms, they must self-isolate immediately for five days after the onset of symptoms.

Masking for children over the age of 2 and younger than JK age is encouraged but not required; however, in particular, in alignment with the Ontario government's guidance, masks are encouraged to be worn:

1. If a person is returning back to school or child care on Day 6 post-infection; that person is encouraged to mask until Day 11.
2. If someone is a contact of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (household or non-household), that person is encouraged to wear a mask for the self-monitoring period of 10 days post exposure.

Masking is one of the most reasonable protections we can all take to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect our vulnerable community members from severe outcomes.

The Ministry of Health has released the following updated guidance in regards to isolation recommendations for COVID-19 contacts.

Self-Isolation Guidance

For Non-Household Contacts:

No isolation requirements for any groups. For 10 days after exposure, all close contacts should:

- Self-monitor for symptoms
- Wear a mask and avoid activities where mask removal would be necessary
- Not visit anyone who is at higher risk of illness (i.e. seniors)
- Not visit or attend work in highest risk settings (unless they have previously tested positive in past 90 days)
- Consider wearing a mask for 10 days in public

For Household Contacts:

The following household members do not need to self-isolate but should follow the above precautions for 10 days.

- Household members that have previously tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 90 days.
- Household members that are 18+ and have received their booster dose.
- Household members that are under 18 years old and are **fully vaccinated**
- Household members that do not meet the above criteria must self-isolate as per current requirements.
- If a health care provider has provided an alternative diagnosis and it is a non-infectious cause (physician diagnosed an ear infection that caused fever) the individual could return when fever free and symptoms improving for 24 hours (48 hours for gastrointestinal).

In the event of a COVID-19 vaccination (within 48 hours):

- **Screening Process:** If the child care staff, placement student, child or visitor received a COVID-19 vaccination in the last 48 hours and is experiencing mild headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and/or joint pain that only began after vaccination, and no other symptoms, they should respond “no” in the screening tool and may continue to attend the child care program if they are feeling well enough to do so.
- If the child care staff, placement student, child or visitor lives in a household with an individual who received a COVID-19 vaccination in the last 48 hours and is experiencing mild headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and/or joint pain that only began after vaccination, and no other symptoms, they should respond “no” in the screening tool and are not required to self-isolate (stay home).

Isolation and Testing: If the mild headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and/or joint pain symptoms worsen, continue past 48 hours, or if the individual develops other symptoms, they should leave the child care setting immediately to self-isolate and seek COVID-19 testing if eligible.

Screening for Symptoms will remain in place for children, staff and visitors who are showing signs of illness.

- All individuals must follow the monitoring and isolation advice outlined in the screening tool. Individuals who do not pass the screening are not permitted to attend the program and must stay home
- Hard copy of screens will be available in the front entrance to the child care centre, in the screening area
- Families will be notified of the screening process during their orientation.
- Parents and guardians should be reminded of this requirement through visible signage at the entrances and drop-off areas
- Retention of Health Screen Checks are no longer required to be retained in hard copy form on site, as advised by the Ministry of Education. This aligns with the Province of Ontario’s COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool process
- Children’s Services and Direct Operations will follow Niagara Region’s current Corporate Retention By-Laws regarding record keeping
- All staff, children and families must use hand sanitizer with Alcohol-Based Hand Rub (ABHR). Niagara Region Public Health expectation is at least 60-90% alcohol (minimum 70% is preferred alcohol content for other pathogens. Wherever possible keep with the minimum of 70%)

- See information about the use of masks on the provincial COVID-19 website
- If parents/guardians prefer to have their child(ren) wear a mask, they are responsible for providing their child(ren) with a non-medical mask(s) or face covering each day and should be reminded that if children are wearing masks, they will require a way to store their mask when not in use

If a household member received a COVID-19 vaccination in the last 48 hours and is experiencing mild headache, fatigue, muscle aches, and/or joint pain that only began after vaccination, and no other symptoms as indicated in the COVID-19 Screening Tool, they are not required to self-isolate (stay home). If the symptoms worsen, continue past 48 hours, or if the individual develops other symptoms, they should immediately self-isolate and seek COVID-19 testing.

COVID-19 current symptoms as listed at [Niagara Region Public Health's COVID-19](#) and the Health Check Screen as approved by Public Health.

Access additional information through:
[Niagara Health Assessment Centres](#)

COVID-19 Public Health Info Line: 905-688-8248 or 1-888-505-6074, press 7 for the [COVID-19 Public Chat Link](#)

Complete [Public Health's COVID-19 Self-Assessment](#)

- Only one family at a time will be permitted in the screening area. Whenever possible, family members should not be permitted to enter the child care centre.
- Additional families awaiting entrance must wait outside of the building. They will be reminded to keep physical distancing space between each other while they wait.
- Markers every (2 meters) will be set up reminding people to keep a safe space.
- Children will be transitioned to the playrooms by a staff, unless the child requires additional supports while transitioning from parent to CCC staff.
- At pick up times, parents will be required to wait outside or at the entrance for staff to accompany their child(ren) to the door. Only one family will be permitted in the entrance at a time.

When an Individual Becomes Ill in a Child Care Setting

- Children over the age 2 that are exhibiting possible COVID-19 symptoms of ill health will be separated from the other children and MUST be provided with a mask.
- Staff should wear a N95 mask and eye protection when caring for an individual that has symptoms.
- The N95 mask must be discarded as soon as care is completed.
- Families will be contacted for immediate pick-up.
- Staff, or student who is ill will make arrangements to leave the child care setting immediately.
- The person who is symptomatic should be provided with tissues and reminded of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper disposal of tissues.
- Staff assisting the symptomatic child should avoid contact with child's respiratory secretions.
- All items used that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, cardboard puzzles) should be removed and stored in sealed container for a minimum of 3 days.

- All surfaces and handles, items and activities that the child has used will be cleaned and disinfected in the room of the ill child.

Reporting and Serious Occurrence Reporting:

Reporting Unplanned Disruption of Service Related to COVID-19 -Public Health Ordered Closures and Voluntary Closures

- Child Care Centres are no longer required to submit Serious Occurrences for confirmed COVID-19 cases.
- Child Care Centres are required to report closures related to COVID-19 where they result in an “Unplanned Disruption of Service” to the normal operation.
 - For licensed child care centres, this represents any closure impacting the **entire centre**.
 - Where public health orders a closure of the entire centre submit under “Unplanned Disruption of Service” with the subcategory of “Public Health Closure of the Entire Centre Related to COVID-19”.
 - Where there is voluntary closure of a child care centre, submit under “unplanned Disruption of Service” with the subcategory of “Voluntary Closure of Entire Centre related to COVID-19”.
- Please note that a Serious Occurrence is not required when a child care centre closes a program room but not the entire centre.
- Where there is an existing/open serious occurrence in CCLS for Unplanned Disruption of Service related to COVID-19 and the subcategory for type of closure changes (i.e. Voluntary Closure becomes Public Health Closure or vice versa), revise the serious occurrence.
- Niagara Region Public Health has advised that positive cases are not to be reported.
- Public health officials may determine any additional steps required, including but not limited to how to monitor for other possible infected staff and children and the declaration of an outbreak and closure of rooms and/or entire child care settings.

Serious Occurrence Notification Form

- Follow the regular Serious Occurrence reporting requirements (including submitting a SO report in CCLS and posting the SO notification form). The following language will be used for the Serious Occurrence- as recommended by Niagara Region Public Health.
- **Description:** (name of centre) has voluntary closed the entire child care centre related to COVID-19 **OR** (name of child care centre) has been ordered by Public Health to close the entire child care centre related to COVID-19. .
- **Action Taken:** (name of centre) asks that you continue to follow Public Health recommendations of physical distancing and practice hand washing and the use of PPE.
- **SO Update:** The child care centre will resume operations **OR** the child care centre has been cleared by Public Health to resume operations.
- **Final SO Update:** The Ministry of Education has deemed this Serious Occurrence closed.
- The serious occurrence notification form must be posted as required under the *CCEYA*, unless the local public health unit advises otherwise.

Notification of Absenteeism: Associated with COVID-19 (Ministry of Education this process will be in place until the end of June 2022).

- Given the widespread transmission of the COVID-19 variants and changes to the provincial testing approach, child care operators will no longer be routinely notifying families of positive cases or if an individual is absent due to symptoms associated with COVID-19.
- If absenteeism rises to a defined level in a child care program (approximately 30% above baseline), child care centres are expected to send a notification to families and staff/providers in the affected child care setting, with information on public health measures for families and staff/providers to follow (e.g., monitoring of COVID-19 symptoms).
- Child care centres are encouraged to reach out to their local public health in this scenario to get access to the required template letter.
- Email Covidschools@niagararegion.ca to report to NRPH.

Dismissed families will be notified by email from the Manager/Supervisor.

Actions to Protect Your Health

- Wash your hands often with soap and water or alcohol based hand sanitizer
- Sneezing and cough into your sleeve.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Remind parents that they should be monitoring their children's health and keeping children who are unwell at home.

Medical masks and eye protection will be provided for staff that choose to wear them. (It is the responsibility of the staff to clean and disinfect their eye protection daily or when visibly soiled. **Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act (OHSA) employers must take reasonable precaution to protect the health and safety of workers.**

WSIB COVID-19 Links:

- [WSIB COVID update](#)
- [FAQs about claims and COVID-19](#)
- [Occupational disease and Workplace Health Hazards](#)
- [Employer's Exposure Incident Reporting Form PIER](#)

Risk & Symptoms

- [Screening for symptoms of Novel Coronavirus](#)

Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

- [Prevent the Spread of COVID-19](#)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for the Community - Niagara Region, Ontario](#)

Child Care Centres During COVID-19

[Schools, Child Care Centres, Licensed Home Child Care Programs, and Camps During COVID-19 - Niagara Region, Ontario](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

- [FAQ Resources](#)
- [COVID-19 Posters and Resources](#)

All staff will review our regular internal updates, provided to all employees via email, notifications regarding the Niagara Region COVID-19 Updates

Mental Health

Additional Staffing Supports:

[COVID-19-Staff Resources](#)

- Employees can access the Employee and Family Assistance Program (EFAP).
- If you are seeking Access to EFAP it is 24/7/365 – by telephone or online:
 - Call the Morneau Shepell Care Access Centre toll free at 1-844-880-9142.
 - Via [Workhealthlife](#) or:
 - Online access to request services.
 - First Chat: to type/text a real-time conversation with a counsellor.
 - E-Counselling to exchange written messages online with a counsellor.

Staff can access the My EFAP mobile application that provides on-the-go support with a timely selection of articles, videos and direct access to e-counselling.

(Updated September 1, 2022)