

# Regulated child-care operators free until May 30, with list of rules for expansion <sup>[1]</sup>

Chief medical officer of health confident child-care will be done safely

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## AVAILABILITY

Access online <sup>[2]</sup>

## EXCERPTS

Regulated daycares in Newfoundland and Labrador have a new set of instructions to follow when services expand slightly on Monday, as the province relaxes public health restrictions to Alert Level 4.

The policy, sent to regulated child-care centres and day homes, said that children of current clients going back to work can now attend, in addition to children of essential workers.

Minister of Education and Early Childhood Education Brian Warr said over 900 families with essential workers have availed of free child-care.

He said the regulated daycare is free until May 30 for essential workers, and current clients with parents returning to work, because the province is paying those centres and family operators as if they were at full capacity.

"I hope that we can get to Alert Level 3 and get more of our children back in our daycares and obviously more people out working and get the economy kick-started again," said Warr.

Warr said he hasn't heard any concern from early childhood educators about a possible increase in the number of children being cared for, although he's not sure how many more children will be attending come Monday.

The guidelines were created in consultation with public health and the chief medical officer of health.

"Child-care operators have been open all along for essential workers so there is experience right now in the industry in providing a safe environment for children to be cared for while their parents are working," Dr. Janice Fitzgerald said Wednesday afternoon.

### Reduced capacity, frequent cleaning

Under the policy, everyone entering a child-care service must be screened for COVID-19 symptoms and asked about their travel history each time they go in.

People with respiratory symptoms, like fever, cough, fatigue or muscle aches, are not allowed to enter or participate in child-care for two weeks.

Child-care operators must close if 20 per cent of staff and children within a homeroom or the facility itself have respiratory illness 48 hours before attending.

Child-care centres will operate at just half their normal capacity, or a maximum of 30 people including adults or children, whichever is fewer. No more than 10 people can be assigned to a homeroom or an outdoor play area and travel outside the child-care centre is not permitted.

As of Monday, regulated child-care centres and day homes must also record everyone who comes in on their daily register.

The policy said family day homes should be restricted to people currently living there and the families receiving care.

"This is important for contact tracing should it be required," it read.

Child-care operators must keep entrances locked, and post signs about drop off and pick up procedures.

Measures put in place at the beginning of the pandemic, like having one parent at drop off and pick up, and having them stay in their vehicles until they've been screened for COVID-19 symptoms by phone, handwashing and physical distancing will continue.

Enhanced cleaning, sanitation and disinfection practices, like cleaning surfaces that are frequently touched twice daily and removing clutter and toys that can't be easily cleaned, will also continue.

Sensory play, like water, sand, and play dough must be avoided unless they can ensure it will be used by only one child, or their sibling.

Under extenuating circumstances, child-care services can temporarily change the age range they're licensed to care for to accommodate siblings of essential workers.

**Region:** Newfoundland <sup>[3]</sup>

**Tags:** health and safety <sup>[4]</sup>

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