

Outbreaks at Alberta child-care centres appear to be slowing — but vigilance is key, expert says ^[1]

There have been 36 COVID-19 outbreaks of 5 or more cases in facilities since mid-summer

Author:

Source: CBC News

Format: Article

Publication Date: 22 Jan 2021

AVAILABILITY

Access online ^[2]

EXCERPTS

The falling number of COVID-19 outbreaks at Alberta child-care facilities appear to show measures in place are working, says an infectious disease expert.

Craig Jenne, an associate professor at the University of Calgary in the department of microbiology, immunology and infectious diseases, said the numbers peaked along with community transmission.

The key now is to keep overall cases down and watch for coronavirus variants, Jenne said.

"We believe our current defences are working well against the viral strain that's here now," Jenne said. "But if that changes — if that is able to spread more easily — it may mean that our current limitations on occupancy and spaces and handwashing may not be as effective at stopping viral spread.

"That may lead to more transmission within child care, but also within the community, meaning more kids are going to a daycare or child-care setting with the virus."

In August, there were two outbreaks of five or more cases, and 10 people tested positive. By December, there were 15 new outbreaks at child-care centres with 125 cases.

But this month, there are fewer than half as many outbreaks — So far this month there are six new childcare outbreaks in Alberta including 64 cases.

"In every outbreak, health officials have acted quickly and are worked closely with operators to limit spread and protect the health of everyone involved," said Alberta Health spokesperson Tom McMillan in an email.

"This includes conducting contact tracing and ensuring that anyone at risk of exposure is contacted, isolated and tested."

When asked to provide numbers for all outbreaks — not just those with five or more cases — McMillan said while outbreak protocols are implemented as soon as two cases are linked, outbreaks are reported at five cases.

"Outbreaks are reported at five cases as there it is likely that evidence of epidemiologically linked transmission has occurred. We are reporting data for all publicly reported outbreaks," he said.

Outbreaks since mid-summer

There have been a total of 36 outbreaks of five or more cases in child-care facilities in Alberta since mid-summer.

Lin Farnholz with Coded Minds Canada found out about a case of COVID-19 at one of her Calgary out-of-school care programs and shut down the cohort that was involved.

"My team and I got together on a Sunday, we called all the families to let them know what had happened," Farnholz said.

The outbreak of 5 cases hit in December, despite extra staffing and consistent cleaning.

"At least two of them, I was told, were asymptomatic. So that's a tough thing to fight against, because if you don't know you're sick, it's hard to stop that spread," she said.

Here are details provided by McMillan on all publicly reported outbreaks in child-care centres since August 2020:

August 2020

- Edmonton Zone: 1 outbreak (5 total cases)
- Calgary Zone: 1 outbreak (5 total cases)

September 2020

- Edmonton Zone: 1 outbreak (5 total cases)

October 2020

- Edmonton Zone: 1 outbreak (12 total cases)
- Calgary Zone: 1 outbreak (21 total cases)
- South Zone: 2 outbreaks (29 total cases)

November 2020

- Edmonton Zone: 4 outbreaks (65 total cases)
- Calgary Zone: 3 outbreaks (22 total cases)
- North Zone: 1 outbreak (10 total cases)

December 2020

- Edmonton Zone: 7 outbreaks (49 total cases)
- Calgary Zone: 7 outbreaks (54 total cases, 4 active)
- North Zone: 1 outbreak (22 total cases)

January 2021

- Edmonton Zone: 4 outbreaks (33 total cases, 20 active)
- Calgary Zone: 1 outbreak (26 total cases, 26 active)
- Central Zone: 1 outbreak (5 total cases)

Region: Alberta ^[3]

Tags: COVID-19 ^[4]

health and safety ^[5]

Source URL (modified on 25 Jan 2021): <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/01/outbreaks-alberta-child-care-centres-appear-be-slowing-%E2%80%94-vigilance>

Links

[1] <https://childcarecanada.org/documents/child-care-news/21/01/outbreaks-alberta-child-care-centres-appear-be-slowing-%E2%80%94-vigilance> [2]

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/craig-jenne-child-care-university-of-calgary-tom-mcmillan-1.5883277> [3]

<https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/7859> [4] <https://childcarecanada.org/taxonomy/term/9040> [5]

<https://childcarecanada.org/category/tags/health-and-safety>