

Public Health Interim Guidance for Yukon Daycares and Day Homes: Enhanced Measures During the COVID-19 Pandemic

14 May 2020



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This guidance document is informed by the Yukon public health reopening plan and is also in keeping with “Six steps to staying safe: COVID-19” and the latest information on the yukon.ca/covid-19 website as of May 14 2020.

Interim Guidance for Yukon Daycares and Day Homes outlines methods to maintain a safe and healthy environment for children and staff and to minimize the risk of COVID-19 in Yukon. It identifies key infection prevention and control practices to implement in child care settings and actions to take if a child or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 (as defined on [Yukon.ca/covid-19](https://yukon.ca/covid-19)). This guidance is based on the latest scientific and infection control evidence and the current state of the epidemic in Yukon. It will be updated as new evidence arises and/or the Yukon epidemiology significantly changes.

Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in Canada and in Yukon, and current evidence that children are at a lower risk of developing COVID-19, child care can safely remain open, and provide safe and healthy childcare while maintaining safe workplaces. Child care services should adapt to support public health and infection prevention and control measures, including regular and thorough hand washing, personal practices, frequent cleaning and disinfection, safe spacing through physical distancing and reduced physical and, as described in this guidance. Child care services are also encouraged to implement routine daily screening for all staff and children, as well as to enhance existing policies so that children or staff who have respiratory or gastrointestinal symptoms (e.g. fever, cough, diarrhea) to remain at home.

See Appendix A of this document for Frequently Asked Questions about child care settings.

Hand washing and Personal Practices

All licensed childcare centres and day homes must adhere to the following hand hygiene and personal practices.

Children and staff can pick up germs easily from anything they touch, and can spread those germs to objects, surfaces, food and people. These germs are transferred to faces through touching nose, mouth and eyes. Thorough hand washing with plain soap and water for at least 20 seconds is still the single most effective way to reduce the spread of illness. In addition staff should be careful not to touch their faces. It is not practical to endeavor to keep children from touching their faces. Instead we recommend teaching them to keep hands to themselves, off the faces of others to use positive reinforcement through play to teach these messages.

Educators play a key role in helping support all children to ensure hand washing occurs and is performed effectively. Children forget about proper hand washing so staff and children should practice often and staff should model washing hands properly in a fun and relaxed way. Everyone should wash their hands more often! Hand washing should be frequent throughout the day and should occur at, but not limited to, the following times:

Children should wash their hands:

- When they arrive at school and before they go home
- After using the washroom
- Before eating and drinking
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- After sneezing or coughing into hands
- Before and after any transitions within the school setting (e.g. to another classroom, indoor-outdoor transitions, moving to on-site childcare, etc.)
- After playing outside or handling pets

Care providers, teachers, administrators and support staff should wash hands:

- When they arrive at school and before they go home
- After using the washroom
- Before handling food or assisting children with eating
- Before and after giving or applying medication or ointment to a child or self
- After each diaper change
- After contact with body fluids (i.e., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood)
- After cleaning tasks
- After removing gloves
- After handling garbage
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- Before and after any transitions within the school setting (e.g. to another classroom, indoor-outdoor transitions, moving to on-site childcare, etc.)

We recommend that caregivers model other personal practices such as using a sleeve or tissue to catch a cough and sneeze (e.g. due to seasonal allergies) and staying home when even mildly ill.

Posters about practicing hand hygiene are available here:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/reduce-spread-covid-19-wash-your-hands.html>

https://yukon.ca/sites/yukon.ca/files/hss/hss-imgs/hss_sign-handwashing_2020.pdf

Frequent cleaning and disinfecting

All programs must follow the territorial regulations regarding cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting:

www.hss.gov.yk.ca/pdf/ccc_regulatory_guidelines.pdf

It is encouraged to clean, sanitize and disinfect common areas and items (such as tables, chairs, toys and bathrooms) more frequently, at least three to four times a day, as feasible.

Each educator is encouraged to clean and disinfect shared staff areas such as staff bathrooms, etc., at least twice a day and objects when they are transferred between staff (e.g. phones).

If a child becomes sick while at the facility. In addition to isolating the child, all items touched or used by the child must be cleaned and disinfected.

Any water in play tables should be changed between groups. After use by one group, the water must be discarded immediately and the basin should be washed and sanitized.

Safe Spacing through Physical Distancing and Minimizing Physical Contact

Staff should minimize the frequency of direct physical contact with children as much as feasible and reasonable. This must be balanced with providing appropriate physical and emotional support. Using small groups of children with a single staff member, allows for physical contact to be practiced safely within that group. In addition games and activities can be used to promote safe spacing. Hand washing and personal practices do mitigate physical contact and should be used following close contact when physical contact is appropriate (e.g. to comfort an upset child). Staff should, as much as feasible, encourage children to minimize physical contact with each other. Staff should maintain safe spacing of two metres from one another.

It is reasonable to establish different expectations based on age and/or developmental readiness. For example, younger children should be supported to have minimized direct contact with one another and to have physical contact with a single caregiver only, while older children should be supported to maintain physical distance whenever possible. Children from the same household (e.g., siblings) do not need to maintain physical distance from each other.

The following physical distancing strategies are recommended in the child care setting:

- **Avoid close greetings** (e.g., hugs, handshakes).
- Regularly remind children to keep hands for one's self, not to touch others.
- **Organize children into smaller groups and/or spread children out** to minimize direct physical contact.
 - Use different classroom configurations (e.g., separating tables) or different locations in the facility (e.g., different rooms, outdoors).
 - Set up small group environments to reduce the number of children in a group, for example, set up two or three areas for coloring or doing crafts.
 - Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children and staff.
 - › Adapt group activities to minimize physical contact and reduce shared items.
 - › Remove toys that encourage group play in close proximity or increase the likelihood of physical contact. Keep toys that encourage individual play.
 - › Help younger children learn about physical distancing and less physical contact by creating games that include basic principles such as “two arm lengths apart”.
 - Manage flow of people in common areas especially smaller areas such as hallways and bathrooms.
 - Increase the distance between nap mats, if possible. If space is tight, place children head-to-toe or toe-to-toe.
- **Minimize the number of additional adults** entering the center to provide programming, unless that person is critical to the care and/or inclusion of a child in care (e.g. speech language pathologist). For example, encourage parents to drop children off at the door rather than come inside.

Posters with additional social distancing measures are available here:

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/social-distancing.html

Note: the licensing requirement for child/staff ratios must be maintained at all times.

Pick-up and Drop-Off

- Parents should maintain physical distance from staff and other children present and be reminded to practice diligent hand hygiene and maintain physical distance when they are in the facility.
 - Parents and caregivers who are ill, even mildly ill, must not enter the child care facility.
- **Stagger the timings of pick-up and drop-off if possible.**
- If there are multiple entrances, pick-up and drop off can be split at separate entrances to avoid parents gathering in large numbers.
- **Reduce contact during sign in/out.** Parents should use their own pen and avoid touching the sign in/out sheet directly or should wash their hands or use an alcohol- based hand sanitizer directly before and after touching the sign in/out sheet.

Illness

This guidance, should be used in conjunction with existing policies related to ill children (including, respiratory and gastrointestinal illness) within the facility and returning to care.

Symptoms to look for include, but are not limited to, fever, cough and shortness of breath or feeling unwell. Any child, staff or parent/guardian who is sick is not permitted to enter the facility, even if their symptoms are mild.

Staff who display symptoms should inform their supervisor and go home right away.

If a child develops symptoms while at the facility, please take the following actions:

1. Isolate the child in a separate room. If a separate room is not available at that time, keep the child at least two metres away from other children. Educators should wash their hands after contact with the child, and avoid contact with the child's respiratory secretions.
2. Notify the parents/guardians to come and pick up the child immediately.
3. All items (toys, bedding, tables, etc.) used by the child should be immediately removed from the reach of any other children and should be sanitized right away. The areas where the child has been should be cleaned and sanitized (e.g. doorknobs, bathrooms, isolation room).

Each facility is required to identify a plan for self-isolation, including a room with a closed door and designated space to hold a sick child.

Please contact YCDC at 867-667-8323, if absenteeism is higher than expected level (i.e. more than 5-10 per cent) determined by the daycare, and it is thought to be due to a communicable disease such as influenza or a gastrointestinal illness.

Screening

Parents/guardians need to conduct screening at home daily, prior to bringing their child to a licensed centre or day home.

Parents/guardians should check their children's temperatures daily before coming to the facility. Parents should be informed at the time of program enrollment or registration that this is the practice and place visible signage (posters) at the facility as a reminder. Temperature should be taken six hours after last over the counter medication is taken.

For reference, normal temperatures are:

- Mouth: 35.5-37.5°C (95.9-99.5°F)
- Underarm: 36.5-37.5°C (97.7-99.5°F)
- Ear (not recommended in infants): 35.8-38.0°C (96.4-100.4°F)

Parents/guardians must conduct active symptoms screening every morning (see Appendix B). Educators must complete the tool with the parents/guardians each morning when the child is dropped off.

Meals and food handling

Encourage parents/guardians to provide meals and snacks for the child.

If a child does not have a home-provided meal for the day, the program may provide food to the child.

If it is not possible for parents/guardians to regularly provide meals or snacks, the following measures are recommended:

- Staff serve food and plates directly to the children
- Remove all shared containers from the dining areas (water/milk pitchers, snack bowls, etc.)
- If using single-service packets of food or condiments, pass it directly to the child rather than letting them self-serve.
- All snacks should be pre-packaged and passed directly to the child.
- Children and visitors are prohibited from entering the kitchen.
- Children are not allowed to participate in food preparation activities.
- All educators who are handling food must practice diligent hand hygiene and are not to work if symptomatic.
- All food should be served to campers on single service/disposable utensils and plates
- If possible, children should be encouraged to use utensils for eating, not fingers.

Outdoor activities

- Have children outside often, including learning activities, snack time and play time.
- Ensure adequate ventilation and open windows if possible.
- Routine cleaning of outdoor spaces is sufficient. Public playgrounds and spaces may be used.

Visitors

Only parents, guardians, Child Care Services Unit staff and special staff for learning support, such as speech language pathologists, are permitted to enter the facility. They must observe physical spacing of two metres from all persons except their own children.

All non-essential visitors and volunteers are not permitted to enter.

Signage

Post signs and other visual cues throughout the facility to remind staff, children and parents/guardians to perform hand hygiene and good respiratory hygiene (cover nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing).

Post signs to remind individuals not to enter if they are sick, even if their symptoms are mild. COVID-19 posters can be found here:

www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/diseases/2019-novel-coronavirus-infection/awareness-resources.html

Personal Protective Equipment

Personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves are not recommended in the child care setting, beyond those used by staff as part of regular precautions for the hazards normally encountered in their regular course of work (e.g. diapering children). Cloth or non-medical homemade masks are not recommended. Wearing one is a personal choice. More information about COVID-related mask use is available here.

- Masks are not recommended for use by children unless advised to do so by a health care provider. In young children in particular, masks can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes.

General guidelines

The usual regulatory expectations for childcare and family day homes continue, including Yukon Health and Social Services Regulatory Guidelines for Child Care and Family Day home Programs. The guidelines can be found here:

www.hss.gov.yk.ca/pdf/ccc_regulatory_guidelines.pdf



Appendix A

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What do we know about COVID-19 in children?

- The virus that causes COVID-19 has a very low infection rate in children.
- Unlike adults the rates of transmission are unknown, and believed to be low.
- There is currently no documented evidence of child-to adult transmission. There are no documented cases of children bringing an infection into the home, from school or otherwise. This is likely the result of the limited number of cases and the mild symptoms in those children who do have COVID-19 illness.
- There is no conclusive evidence that children who are asymptomatic pose a risk to other children or to adults.

Should children with allergies stay home?

- Children with seasonal allergies do NOT need to stay home.
- If parents are unsure whether symptoms are related to allergies or an infection, the child should stay home as a precaution and the family should contact their health care provider for medical advice.

Are toys and books safe?

- Encourage individual play including the use of toys and books that can be cleaned. On the other hand, items that may encourage group play in close proximity or increase the likelihood of physical contact should be avoided. Use toys and other items that can be easily cleaned throughout the day.
- Like other respiratory viruses, there is no conclusive evidence that the COVID-19 virus is transmitted via textbooks, paper, or other paper products. As such, there is no need to limit the distribution of books or paper based educational resources to children due to concerns about virus transmission. However, children should be encouraged to use books for individual time.

If a child lives with a person with confirmed COVID-19, can the child still attend child care?

- No. People that live with a confirmed COVID-19 patient who is still infectious will have been directed to self-isolate at home.
- For more information on living with someone with COVID-19, visit the [Yukon.ca Self-Isolation](#) page.

Are pregnant women at a higher risk for COVID-19? Should they continue to work in child care settings?

- Pregnant women are not at higher risk of being infected by COVID-19 or developing severe illness.
- Pregnant staff should consult their health care provider to assess their risk and to determine if they should work.
- For more information, visit the [BCCDC Pregnancy page](#).

Should staff with underlying health conditions continue to work in child care settings?

- People with chronic health conditions such as diabetes, heart disease and lung disease are at higher risk of developing more severe illness or complications if they acquire COVID-19. The risk of acquiring COVID-19 in Yukon has remained low for some time.
- Staff with underlying health conditions should consult their health care provider to assess their risk and to determine if they should work.
- COVID-19 virus has a very low infection rate in children and there is no conclusive evidence that children who are asymptomatic pose a risk to other children or to adults.
- For more information, visit the [BCCDC Vulnerable Populations](#) page.

Is it safe for staff who have elderly household members with underlying health conditions to continue to work in child care settings?

- Yes. It is safe for child care staff who have elderly family members or Elders with underlying health conditions living in their house to work in child care settings.
- They should follow good infection prevention and control and hand hygiene practices before work and after work, as described in this guidance.

Is there a risk to looking after children of health care workers who work with COVID-19 patients?

- There is no evidence indicating children of health care workers (HCW) are at increased risk of COVID-19 infection than children of non-HCW. This is likely due to diligent adherence to infection control practices in health care settings, careful monitoring of HCW for symptoms, and follow-up of their household contacts.

Is it safe for a child or staff to attend two different child care settings?

- Yes. It is safe for children or staff to attend more than one different child care setting.

Are child care providers being prioritized for testing for COVID-19?

- Anyone with symptoms, however mild, can be assessed by a healthcare provider to determine whether testing for COVID-19 is appropriate. If you have no symptoms, testing is not recommended.
- Use the Yukon COVID-19 [Self-Assessment Tool](#) to help determine if you need further assessment for COVID-19 testing by a healthcare provider or at a local collection centre.

Appendix B: Daily Screening Questionnaire

Dear parent or guardian, so we can assess our ability to care for your child today, please fill out this questionnaire to determine if your child can attend today.

1.	Do you, or your child attending today, have any of the following symptoms?	CIRCLE ONE	
		YES	NO
	• Fever	YES	NO
	• Cough	YES	NO
	• Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing	YES	NO
2.	Have you, or anyone in your household, travelled outside of Yukon in the past 14 days?	YES	NO
3.	Have you, or anyone in your household, been in contact in the last 14 days with someone who is currently being investigated for or confirmed to have COVID-19?	YES	NO
4.	In the past 14 days before your symptoms, did you have close contact with someone who had symptoms of COVID-19 within the 14 days of their return from travel?	YES	NO
5.	Have you, or anyone in your household, been instructed to self-isolate?	YES	NO

If you answered “yes” to any of the above questions, DO NOT enter at this time.

If you have recently developed any of these symptoms, please call 811 or visit:

<https://service.yukon.ca/en/covid-19-self-assessment/> to do a self-assessment to see if you require testing.

If you have answered “no” to all the above questions, please sign in.

Be sure to practise good hand hygiene (use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds) before entering and leaving the facility.

Our goal is to minimize the risk of illness to you, your children and family and our staff. We thank you for your cooperation and understanding.

Name: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____