

Procedures for Child Care Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic

August 21st 2020

This protocol is based on the directives from Alberta Health Services and is in place in all centres. For more information concerning each of the programs, please consult the “Relaunch Plan” Annex for your centre.

What are the procedures for entering and exiting the daycare?

- Daycares: Parents can drop off their child between 7 and 9 am and pick them up between 4 and 6 pm. Out-of-school programs: Drop off between 7 and 8 am and pick up between 4 and 6 pm. This will allow for staggering of arrival and departure times.
- Parents must submit their arrival and departure schedule in advance and inform the child care service of all changes.
- Parents must wait within the security area indicated outside.
- The educator acting as greeter will only allow one parent to enter at a time into the day care’s welcome area.
- One single parent may present themselves at the daycare to drop off or pick up their child. It is recommended that it be the same parent at all times. The parent should not be accompanied by another family member (sister, brother, grandmother, etc.)
- Parents from the same family who are paired between two programs must use the same entrance. However, those who cannot be paired must respect the procedures for their respective program, ex. A 9-year-old child from the out-of-school program enters through that group’s entrance while their parent brings their 2-year-old sibling to their group’s dedicated entrance.

What is the intake procedure?

- Intake will be done at the centre’s identified entrance. An educator will be responsible for bringing the child to their classroom and to bring them to the exit when they leave.
- The educator at the entrance will take the child’s temperature every day upon arrival. If the child has a fever, they must leave with their parent.
- The educator will ask the parent to fill out the AHS written screening questionnaire.
- The educator will enter the child’s hours of attendance.

What is the child/staff ratio?

In keeping with ministerial directives, the daycare has adopted staffing practices such as:

- We assign a cohort to employees of the designated room. These employees must stay with their cohort and not interact with staff or children from another cohort.
- There are no changes to ratios. However, we can accommodate parents to pair siblings withing the same program (ex. pair siblings and/or children of appropriate ages such as two babies with four 2-year-olds or a daycare-age child with school-age children if such is reasonable)
- As much as possible, the daycare must avoid using substitutes or “floating” staff who work with multiple cohorts. Each “floating” employee will be assigned to a maximum of three designated cohorts and must limit physical interactions with the children and wear a mask.
- Any person who enters more than one cohort’s space must wear a mask each time they find themselves in the presence of other staff members/children and must wash their hands (or use an alcohol-based sanitizer) when they enter or leave each room.

What measures must employees take to ensure screening?

- Before each work shift in a daycare, each employee must self-evaluate to detect COVID-19 symptoms according to the directives and forms from AHS.

How many people can attend a daycare?

- Child care programs may operate with cohorts of 30 people per classroom, which includes both staff and children. A program or a daycare may have more than one cohort of 30 people.

How do the cohorts work?

- A cohort is a group of children and employees who stay together all day. Each cohort must not mingle with other cohorts or be in the same room at the same time, including for dropping off and picking up children, meal times, play time, outdoor activities, the staff room, naptime, etc.
- Separate cohorts may be divided by physical non-permeable barriers with a minimal height and distancing of two meters.
- A daycare/kindergarten program or out-of-school care program is considered a cohort.

How will the daycare use shared spaces?

- Shared spaces and structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between cohorts will not be used.
- If play structures must be used by more than one group, they may only be used by one cohort at a time and must be cleaned and disinfected before and after their use by each cohort.

How will the children be allowed to use outside play areas?

- One cohort at a time may use an authorized outside play area (the daycare's yard). The daycare and out-of-school program will also use alternatives such as walks, supervised play in parks and green spaces, but the school's play modules and parks may not be used. The cohort will follow physical distancing practices when possible.
- Many groups can go outside at the same time to play on the school's grounds, but they must be separated from each other to avoid arriving in the greeting area at the same time.
- All play modules must be cleaned and disinfected following each use.

Will the children be able to play with balls and others?

- Each cohort will have designated equipment (ex. balls, sand toys, etc.) An employee must clean and disinfect equipment between each use.
- No materials from the school will be available for use by the out-of-school program. This includes balls and other similar equipment.

How will the daycare manage naps?

- Naps must take place in the cohort's designated room.
- The rooms used for resting or sleeping require sufficient space, a surface of at least 2.5 meters squared per child under 6 years old, if possible.
- Children will be placed head-to-toe.

How will the children use the bathroom?

- The daycare has established a plan to avoid mixing cohorts in the bathrooms.
- One child at a time will be able to use the restroom.

Who will clean the spaces?

- Cleaning will be done by one person from the cohort before the group enters the space and after they have left. A cleaning journal will be on display to note cleaning activities.

What practices will be put in place for activities?

- Activities cannot violate a health order; or must be modified to augment physical distancing, for example:
 - Avoid close-proximity salutations such as handshakes, hugs, kisses.
 - Plan distanced activities and games without touching each other.
 - Avoid, if possible, activities that require being grouped around an object or in part of the room.

- Organize the space to avoid forming groups or bottlenecks.
- Plan to stagger individual participation in activities or use of equipment to avoid gathering in a specific area.

What is the protocol for washing hands?

- The children must wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds at the following times:
 - Upon arrival and before leaving
 - After using the restroom
 - After a diaper change
 - Before eating
 - When hands are filthy
 - After wiping the nose or touching used tissues
 - When they go outside and when they return inside

Who is authorized to enter the daycare?

- There may not be any non-essential visitors and no volunteers in the daycare.
- Parents must enter into the daycare only for an essential need or on appointment, but they must reduce to a minimum the time spent inside and remain two meters away from staff and children.
- Parents who are coming to pick up children from more than one cohort are not authorized to enter the cohort's room, except in the case of absolute necessity. If they must enter, a distance of two meters must be maintained between the staff and the other children.

Are personal items allowed?

- The children require a pair of indoor shoes that will stay at the daycare in their bin.
- Personal items from home are not authorized in the daycare, except for changes of clothing that will remain on-site. All other items are prohibited, for example, electronic devices, toys, books, stuffed animals.
- Necessary medical equipment such as walkers and wheelchairs, etc, must be cleaned and disinfected upon the child's arrival and departure.
- Necessary items such as blankets for naptime, will remain at the daycare and will be washed once a week.
- Sunscreen and bug spray will be provided by the daycare during this period. The brand and specs will be provided as a courtesy. No products provided by the families will be accepted, except for medical reasons.

Will the daycare provide hand sanitizer?

- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer has been placed at every entrance into the staff use area, for parents who are coming to pick up or drop off their children, and for all visitors.
- The distributors will not be placed in locations accessible to the children.

What are expectations for parents, staff, and sick children?

- In keeping with the directives from AHS, the daycare will refuse admission to any child or employee showing symptoms linked with COVID-19 until they are tested. If the results are negative, the person is authorized to return once the symptoms have gone away.
- No child, parent, or educator may enter the daycare if they show symptoms of COVID-19. **No exceptions.**
- Parents must verify the temperature of their child daily prior to arrival. For your information, normal temperatures are as follows:
 - Mouth: 35,5-37,5°C (95,9-99,5°F)
 - Armpit: 36,5-37,5°C (97,7-99,5°F)
 - Ears (not recommended for infants): 35,8-38,0°C (96,4-100,4°F)
 - Forehead: 35,5-37,5°C (95,9-99,5°F)

- The parent who drops off the child must fill out the screening sheet for each child each morning. The employees will examine the form with the parent to make sure that the child is approved to enter the daycare.
- If a child develops symptoms over the course of the day, they will be isolated in a separate room and the parent will immediately come to pick them up. If a separate room is not available, the child will be sent to a quiet corner of the room, a minimum distance of 2 meters away from the others. If the child is young and requires close contact and care, the staff will continue to care for the child until the parent is able to come pick them up, while avoiding contact with the child's respiratory secretions.
- Staff must wash their hands before putting on a mask and before and after having removed it, and before and after having touched any object used by the child.
- All objects, linens, toys, etc. used by the child during their isolation will be cleaned and disinfected after the children are gone. The objects that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (paper, books, puzzles) will be removed and store in a sealed recipient for at least 10 days.

Will the daycare keep a registry in case of a COVID-19 outbreak?

- Parents must fill out a paper copy of the screening questionnaire whenever they present themselves at the center, and every morning.
- The daycare will keep a registry of the known pre-existing medical conditions of the children.

What will we do if there is a case of COVID-19 at the daycare?

- If a child develops symptoms that could be caused by COVID-19 or by a pre-existing condition (ex. allergies), they must be tested for COVID-19 to confirm it is not the source of their symptoms before returning to the daycare.
- A child who has tested negative for COVID-19 does not need to be retested unless new or different symptoms develop.
- For a child suffering from allergies or asthma for which symptoms are similar to those of a cold, the parents must present the negative results of the COVID-19 test before bringing the child back to the daycare.
- Parents must keep their child at home if they show symptoms of a cold even if they are weak.
- If two children or more are identified to be showing symptoms compatible with COVID-19, the daycare will follow the notification procedures in keeping with ministerial protocol.
- If the symptomatic person has tested negative for COVID-19 and that the other members of the family are asymptomatic, they do not have to isolate at home. However, they should remain at home until the negative COVID-19 test is obtained, especially if they have had close contact with the symptomatic person.
- The person showing symptoms must stay at home until they are no longer showing symptoms.
- When a staff person tests positive for COVID-19, they will have to stay at home for a confinement period of 14 days.
- When a parent tests positive for COVID-19, they must immediately inform the daycare. Further, they will have to stay home for a confinement period of 14 days. All the children in the family will not be able to be admitted to the daycare during this period.
- All programs linked with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must shut down for at least 72 hours in order to allow for a follow-up from AHS. Following their visit, AHS will act according to their recommendations.

How will masks be used by staff?

- The use of masks by staff is only encouraged for close and prolonged interactions with the children (for example, changing a diaper or feeding a child)
- The employee greeting families will wear a mask.
- Once a mask has been removed, it will be thrown in a sealed garbage bin (for medical masks) or placed in a sealed recipient to be washed (for non-medical masks).

How will masks be used by the children?

- It is unlikely that the children will be able to wear a mask correctly without touching it, as a consequence wearing a mask is not recommended by AHS.
- It is not mandatory for the educator to wear a mask except for exceptions such as changing a diaper or feeding a child; otherwise the use of a mask is at the educator's discretion.
- In order to follow the rules put in place by Alberta Health and by the Conseil Scolaire Centre Nord, the children of the out-of-school program from kindergarten to Grade 6 must wear a mask at all times indoors and outdoors.
- Wearing a mask indoors is mandatory when cohorts are mixed – this directive is from Alberta Health Services.
- Wearing a mask outdoors for mixed cohorts is a directive of the CSCN.

What sanitary measures have been put in place?

- Staff will ensure that children respect hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (frequently washing one's hands, sneezing and coughing into the elbow, placing used tissues in the garbage, and washing hands immediately after having used a tissue).
- AHS recommend washing hands with soap and water. Alcohol-based sanitizers are suggested to be used in the case where access to water is not possible.
- Access to hand sanitizer must be supervised to avoid accidental poisoning or in case of ingestion. The children will be closely watched when they will be using hand sanitizer.

How will the daycare manage meals and snacks?

- The daycare will not provide any food for the children and will not authorize the sharing of food.
- Parents must provide ALL meals according to the child's schedule.
- Hot meals must be placed in a thermos.
- Food provided by the family must be kept with the child's personal items, or, if refrigeration is necessary, it must be kept in a designated location for the child's cohort and must not be manipulated by the staff of other cohorts.
- Parents must provide utensils and dishes in the lunch box.
- Parents must label all of the children's items (containers, etc.)
- The daycare will not authorize activities involving the children in preparing food.
- The children must physically distance themselves when they eat.
- If a child does not have any food, the daycare will provide dry snacks.
- The daycare's kitchen is closed.
- Parents may no longer bring surprise cakes or snacks to celebrate the kids' birthdays.

How will the daycare manage extra-curricular events?

- Excursions, group transportation, holiday events, performances or celebrations will be postponed until further notice, for these events offer less opportunities for appropriate physical distancing and could entail the mixing of cohorts.

How will the daycare clean and disinfect objects?

- Staff will perform frequent and comprehensive cleaning each day in keeping with the directives from AHS.
- Cleaning and disinfecting toys will be done as follows: a commercial dishwasher or using a detergent with water; rinsing with clean hot water; when drying, spraying or submerging for two minutes using an approved sanitizer; air-drying.
- Staff will ensure that toys placed in the mouth will immediately be placed in a designated bin to be cleaned and disinfected.
- Soft toys (stuffed toys and blankets) must not be shared, and so have been removed.
- Children will not have access to shared sensory tables, including water tables, sand tables, and shared modeling clay. However, the children will be allowed to use individual sensory bins or activities that are not shared between them (clay labeled for individual use, small individual water bowls).

- Any materials that are difficult to clean or disinfect (wood pieces, natural materials, cardboard, toys, stuffed animals, cushions, etc.) have already been removed from the classroom.
- Items such as books and puzzles will not be taken from one room to another.

Can the children bring items from home?

- No. The daycare discourages this practice. If the youngest children need a favourite stuffed toy from home to sleep, they may bring it, but on condition that it remains at the daycare for the entire duration of the pandemic. The stuffed toy will be washed at the centre.
- Items necessary for daily use by the children (for example, mobility or feeding devices, weighted blankets, headphones) must be cleaned and disinfected on arrival and at the end of the day, and must not be used by anyone other than the child.

What is recommended in case of travel?

- Families are encouraged to avoid travelling. If a family travels outside Canada, they must inform the daycare and isolate for 14 days upon their return. The child will not be allowed to come to the center for the parents' 14 days of isolation.
- If COVID-19 symptoms appear during the isolation period, the family must provide the results of a negative test before the child can return to the daycare.

How will the daycare communicate with the parents?

- There will be no physical contact between the cohort's educator and the parent since a different staff member will be in charge of the children's intake and departure.
- Communication notebooks will not be used in order to avoid their being handled by multiple people.
- Communication between educators and families will be done by phone, email, or videoconference.

Why must we sign a service agreement during the progressive reopening?

- Parents and employees must sign an engagement agreement indicating that the rules and procedures established are understood and will be respected. The agreement will be signed by the parents during the progressive reopening.

What will the daycare do if a rule is broken?

- Families that fail to respect the rules more than once will no longer have access to their daycare and their place will be given to another family.

References:

<https://open.alberta.ca/dataset/8d2153a4-eecc-4b11-aba5-e329514fe18f/resource/51aed505-9b56-4367-b1e8-bbd66eca989f/download/cmsw-covid-19-poster-do-not-enter-french-11x17-clr.pdf>

How to use a mask: www.alberta.ca/masks