

STAGE 3: GUIDANCE FOR PRESCHOOL, DAY CARE AND OUT OF SCHOOL CARE (CHILD CARE)

Overview

By implementing good public health practices, businesses and entities can reduce transmission of COVID-19 and other infections such as influenza, common colds and norovirus (a common germ that causes diarrhea and vomiting). All businesses and entities should promote all staff, volunteers and attendees and other eligible persons to be fully vaccinated with COVID-19 vaccine as well as supporting good public health practices such as:

- implementing practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infections among attendees;
- providing procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- maintaining high levels of cleaning and disinfection; and
- complying, to the extent possible, with any applicable Alberta Health guidance found at alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx.

Children 0-11 years of age are not currently eligible for immunization against COVID-19 and remain the only age cohort in Alberta that is unprotected. To support ongoing safe operations, Operators should follow this guidance and the [General Operational Guidance](#). All Albertans are required to follow all applicable Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Orders including the continued requirement for isolation and quarantine.

This document has been developed to support operators of licensed preschools and child care centres in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 as well as other infections among attendees (children, adolescents, adults, parents, guardians, staff and volunteers). It will continue to be updated as requirements change in July and August 2021. This guidance builds upon the [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) Health and Safety Child Care Guidelines](#), which all child care operators are required to follow. All licensed preschools and child care centres will also be required to be in compliance with applicable zoning and health and safety legislation, including the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#) and the [Early Learning and Child Care Regulation](#).

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Operators are encouraged to review and follow the General Operational Guidance.• Operators should notify families of attendees of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures.• Where possible, physical distancing practices should occur, for example:<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ Avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes and encourage physically-distant greetings such as “air fives” and waves.○ Plan for physically-distant activities such as shadow tag.○ Consider ways to set up rooms to avoid clustering or congested areas.
Screening and Response Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Staff, parents and children must not enter the space if they are not feeling well or have COVID-19 symptoms.

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- Before leaving home, staff and children who will access the child care, should self-screen or be screened by a parent or guardian for symptoms each day that they enter the centre using the applicable checklist for their age group ([Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) or [Adult Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#)).
- The child care centre should ask parents if the child is feeling well.
- Parents should be provided a copy of the [Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) upon registration.
- Operators are encouraged to set an expectation with parents that the checklist should be completed on a daily basis.
- If a child develops symptoms while at the facility or on a field trip, the child should be isolated in a separate room and the parent or guardian should be notified to come and pick up the child immediately. If a separate room is not available, the child needs to be kept at least 2 metres away from other children.
- If the child is young and requires close contact and care, staff can continue to care for the child until the parent is able to pick-up the child. Staff should wear a mask during all interactions with the child and should avoid contact with the child's respiratory secretions.
- If a staff chooses to wear a mask, staff should wash their hands before donning a mask and before and after removing the mask (as per [Alberta Health mask guidance](#)), and before and after touching any items used by the child.
- All items, such as bedding, toys etc., used by the child in the 48 hours prior to the onset of their symptoms and while isolated should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child has been picked up. Items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected (e.g. paper, books, cardboard puzzles, etc.) should be removed from the centre and stored for a minimum of 24 hours.
- Anyone that reports symptoms should be directed to stay home, seek health care advice as appropriate (e.g., call Health Link 811, or their primary health care practitioner, or 911 for emergency response), and fill out the [AHS Online Self-Assessment tool](#) to determine if they should be tested.
- Proof of a negative COVID-19 test result is not necessary to return to child care.
- Programs should keep records of children's known pre-existing conditions. If a child develops symptoms that could be caused by either COVID-19 or by a known pre-existing condition (e.g., allergies), the child should be tested at least once for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to child care. This will be considered the child's baseline health.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Written confirmation by a physician that a child or staff member’s symptoms are due to a chronic illness is not necessary. Repeat testing is not necessary unless the nature of the symptom changes (e.g., a chronic cough worsens). • The AHS Coordinated Early Identification and Response (CEIR) team is available to all child care settings at 1-844-343-0971. A site that does not already have an outbreak of COVID-19 must contact the CEIR team as soon as there are 2 or more children/staff members showing COVID-19 symptoms for additional guidance and decision- making support. • Programs directly associated with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must adhere to AHS requirements. This may include temporary program closure to allow for contact tracing processes to occur. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The entire childcare program group, including the staff who care for that group, may be considered to be close contacts of the case, based on the AHS Public Health investigation, and required to quarantine. This is a cautious approach to identifying close contacts in order to minimize the risk of transmission. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Note: Albertans who are partially or fully vaccinated have different quarantine requirements. ○ Staff are assessed on a case-by-case basis. If a staff member consistently maintains a two metre distance from others at all times and has no direct contact with the infected person, they would not be considered a close contact. ○ In order to reduce transmission of COVID-19, childcare programs should consider keeping groups of children separated from other groups as much as possible. This will reduce the number of children that may come into contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and decrease the number of attendees required to quarantine if a child or staff member attends while infectious.
<p>Expectations for Drop-off/Pick-up and Entry Areas</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs should develop procedures for drop off and pick up that reduce congestion to the greatest extent possible. Possible strategies include separate entrances, having one designated parent/guardian pick up and drop off each child, staggering entry, or limiting the number of people in entry areas. • To support public health contact tracing efforts in the event that a child or staff member tests positive or an outbreak is identified, the operator should keep a record of names and contact information for all children, staff and visitors. For more instructions, refer to the General Operational Guidance. • Program attendance needs to be reported monthly to the Ministry of Children’s Services. • Parents or guardians are permitted to enter the program when needed, such as during pick-up and drop-off, but should minimize the time spent



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	<p>there, and stay 2 metres away from staff and other children at all times. Maintaining appropriate distance will limit the number of close contacts required to quarantine in the event of a positive case.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facility operators and staff should use telephone or video conferencing when possible to meet with staff and parents.
<p>Hand Hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hand sanitizer should be placed in convenient locations throughout the centre, but be kept out of the unsupervised reach of children. ● Child care programs must adhere to handwashing guidelines outlined in the AHS Health and Safety Guidelines Child Care Guidelines. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol is recommended as there is evidence that it reduces the risk of transmission of COVID-19. Hand sanitizer can help reduce the risk of infection by or the spread of microorganisms when hand washing is not possible. If parents have questions about their child using alcohol-based hand sanitizer they should contact the operator to discuss potential alternatives.
<p>Additional Public Health Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Use of masks by program staff can be considered based on a staff member’s personal assessment of their risk of contracting COVID-19. ● Children attending a child care program are not required to wear a mask while at child care but should be supported to wear one if their parent prefers. ● If masks are worn, Alberta Health mask guidance should be followed and can be found here: www.alberta.ca/masks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Once a mask has been removed, it should be thrown in a lined trash bin (disposable masks) or placed in a sealed container to be laundered (reusable masks). ● Organizations providing off-site activities (e.g., field trips): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Child care programs should seek alternative space during field trips to eat lunch or to be separate from multiple groups to ensure they do not use shared areas (e.g., lunch rooms). ○ In order to limit the number of individuals who may be required to quarantine in the event of a positive case, staff at the off-site activity (i.e. staff that are not part of the childcare program) should maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres from the children and child care staff. ○ Hold activities outdoors as much as possible. ○ Organizations providing off-site activities should develop procedures to address staff that become symptomatic during the field trip. ● Child care programs should develop procedures to address children or staff developing symptoms during the field trip; plans should include a designated area to isolate the symptomatic individual and how to notify a

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	parent/guardian and how the symptomatic child will be transported home from the off-site activity.
Food	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Utensils should be used to serve food (not fingers). • Limit access to kitchen/meal-prep/snack areas that could be accessed by children, non-designated staff, or essential visitors.
Entertainment and Performances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and staff may practice, rehearse, or take part in performance activities and in a manner that aligns with the Guidance for Performing Arts. • Day care and preschool attendees are allowed to participate in permitted sport, fitness and recreational activities as described in the Guidance for Sport, Fitness and Recreation.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators are expected to follow provincial masking laws if using public transit, taxis or commercial ride shares. • Children should be assigned seats and a record of this seating plan should be kept in order to assist with contact tracing should a child test positive for COVID-19. Children who live in the same household should be seated together. • Child care programs should develop procedures for loading, unloading and transfers that support physical distancing of 2 metres between all persons (except household members) when possible. This may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children start loading from the back to the front of the vehicle. ○ Children from the same household may share seats. ○ Children start unloading from the front to the back of vehicle. ○ Children in grades 4 and above are expected to wear a mask while in the vehicle when distancing is not possible (especially if cohorts are mixed during transport). Masks may also be considered for younger children if appropriate. • If a child becomes symptomatic during the trip, a mask should be made available. The driver will contact the school to make the appropriate arrangements for the child to be picked up (see screening and response plan above). • Vehicle cleaning and records: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Increase frequency of cleaning and disinfection of applicable high-touch surfaces, such as door handles, child seats, window areas, rails, steering wheel, mobile devices and GPS prior to each run. ○ It is recommended that vehicle cleaning logs be kept.
Out of School Care Programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the instance that a child arrives at the child care program directly after attending school (for which the child was assessed for symptoms by a parent before attending), program staff should assess the child to see if they are feeling well.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Children in grades 4 and higher who must use school common areas to access or exit a child care program must wear a mask while in these spaces before entering the program’s space. The child may remove their mask after being assessed for symptoms and permitted to enter the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Store reusable masks in a clean, breathable bag or container if it will be worn it again. Consider using a bag that can be washed. Masks and storage containers/bags should be labeled with the child’s name and kept with the child’s personal belongings (e.g. coat hook, cubbie or locker).
<p>Use of Shared Spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If play structures are to be used by more than one group, programs should increase the frequency of cleaning of shared equipment. Only one program group at a time should use a licensed outdoor play space. Follow physical distancing practices when possible. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If using a public or school playground, ensure that children engage in hand hygiene before and after play. Programs that utilize a space that has other after-hours user groups (e.g. programs in churches, community centres) should ensure the space is cleaned before and after using the space. It is recommended that cleaning be done by one person directly before the group enters the space and after it exits the space. A cleaning log should be posted and used to track cleaning.
<p>Cleaning and Disinfecting</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs should engage in frequent, thorough cleaning and disinfecting. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces, including diapering areas, as per AHS’ COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Environmental Cleaning of Public Facilities. Cleaning and disinfecting of toys should be done by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial dishwasher <p style="text-align: center;">OR</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Wash with detergent and water; Rinse with clean, warm water; Wipe, spray or immerse for two minutes in an approved disinfectant; and, Air dry. Increased frequency of cleaning of soft furnishings, permanent carpets and upholstered furniture is recommended. Ensure mouthed toys are immediately put into a designated bucket to be cleaned and disinfected.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Soft toys (plush toys and blankets) should be laundered in hot water and dried thoroughly between children. • Regarding items that travel with the child from home to the child care centre on a daily or regular basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Bringing in non-essential personal items should be discouraged. ○ If coat hooks, lockers or open cubbies are to be used to store personal items, they should be assigned to a single child or be cleaned and disinfected in between uses. ○ Equipment that is required for children’s day-to-day use (e.g., mobility or feeding devices, weighted blankets, headphones) should be cleaned and disinfected at drop off and pick up, and should not be used by anyone other than the child.
<p>Overnight Child Care</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operators providing overnight child care during COVID-19 should: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Continue to comply with existing public health orders and guidance, as applicable for licensed child care settings. ○ Ensure beds or cots for children from different households are arranged at a minimum of 2 meters apart. • Before offering overnight care, operators should consult with Children’s Services and Alberta Health Services to assess COVID-19 risk specific to their overnight program and collectively determine if additional measures are needed to minimize risk of transmission during overnight care.
<p>Other resources</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General information regarding COVID-19 (Government of Alberta) www.alberta.ca/coronavirus-info-for-albertans.aspx • How to hand wash (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-ipc-flu-handwash-how-to.pdf • How to use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/healthinfo/ipc/if-hp-flu-hand-rub-how-to.pdf • Diapering procedures poster (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eph-diapering-procedure-poster.pdf • Hand washing posters (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-you-d-clean-em.pdf https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-you-d-clean-em-2.pdf • Arts and crafts safety (AHS) https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/assets/wf/eph/wf-eh-arts-crafts-safety.pdf

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This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed.

Last Revised: June 2021