

Reopening Child Care

Frequently Asked Questions

7/3/2020

This document has been prepared by Children's Services and Halton Region Public Health to support child care centres and home care providers in reopening. This document will be updated and distributed, as needed.

If you have questions that are not included below, please send your questions to childcareservices@halton.ca. This account is being monitored regularly.

Considerations for Reopening Child Care Centres/Homes

1. Will I need to update my current license?
 - Operators should review their current license capacity with the Ministry of Education [guidelines](#) to determine if their license needs to be updated. Operators may require a Director's Approval or a change to the conditions listed on their license, such as approval for family age grouping.
 - Operators can apply for a revision on the Child Care Licensing System. For further assistance, operators can contact their Program Advisor, Child Care Quality and Assurance and Licensing Branch.

2. Will I require additional supplies to reopen my child care centre/home?
 - Operators will require personal protection equipment (PPE) and other supplies to ensure they are providing a safe and healthy environment for children, families and staff. These may include but are not limited to:
 - Latex-free gloves;
 - Medical grade face masks and/or face shields;
 - Chlorine bleach and spray bottles;
 - Disinfectants with a Drug Identification Number (DIN) or low-level hospital grade disinfectant
 - Sanitizer wipes;
 - Hand sanitizer (with 60-90% alcohol content); and
 - Paper towels.

Note: Operators may be required to purchase activities/toys that stand up to additional cleaning.

3. Where can I buy personal protective equipment?
 - Personal protective equipment (PPE) may be purchased from vendors who provide materials and supplies to the child care community. In addition, the Ontario Together Portal has a [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#) that lists Ontario businesses that provide personal protective equipment.
 - Should operators have challenges sourcing PPE prior to opening, please contact: childcareservices@halton.ca

Centre Operations

1. Can child care centres offer part-time and full-time child care?
 - Operators may provide care to both full-time and part-time children but must follow the Ministry of Education's guidelines for cohort size.
 - A cohort is defined as a group of children and the staff members assigned to them, who stay together for a minimum of seven days. The maximum cohort size for each room in a child care centre must consist of no more than 10 individuals, including staff and children.
 - Two part-time children (sharing one child care spot) count as two children in a cohort.

Parent Fees

1. Can parents pay fees to hold their children's place until September?
 - As per Ontario Regulation 137/15 under the *Child Care and Early Years Act*, 2014, operators that are reopening are prohibited from charging a fee or deposit if a parent is not offered a spot or chooses not to accept a spot.

Policy Updates

1. Are operators required to develop new policies and procedures to open child care centres/homes?
 - In order to reopen child care, current policies may need to be updated and new policies may need to be created to ensure operators are in compliance with the enhanced health and safety requirements. This includes:
 - Health Screening Policy and an Entrance Screening Tool.
 - Refer to [COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#) to support with the development the Health Screening Policy and Entrance Screening Tool;
 - Sanitary Health and Safety Protocols (e.g. cleaning of classrooms, toys, equipment, diapering, cleaning of children's bedding/cots/cribs);
 - Hand Hygiene Policy and Procedures (e.g. including proper glove use, hand washing and when and how to use hand sanitizer); and,
 - Exclusion Policy (how to exclude children and staff who experience illness and procedures for reporting illness to the Ministry of Education, Halton Children's Services and Halton Region Public Health)
 - Policies and procedures must include:
 - How physical distancing will be encouraged (e.g. set up of outdoor and indoor play space that encourages physical distancing);
 - How staff shifts will be scheduled, where applicable;
 - Scheduling of group events and/or in-person meetings; and,
 - Parent drop off and pick up procedures.

Note: Support for required policies and procedures can be found in the in the Ministry of Education guidelines. Halton Region provided sample policies as an attachment to the memo dated Friday June 12, 2020.

Note: Policies and procedures related to COVID-19 must be shared with families for their information and to ensure they are aware of expectations, including keeping children home when they are sick. Staff must be trained on the policies and procedures.

There is a [resource document for child care providers](#) that includes guidance on how to safely conduct daily screening and keep daily attendance records that may inform policy and procedures.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

1. How can operators maintain the health and safety of their child care program/home?
 - To maintain the health and safety of the program, operators and providers should ensure that all current infection prevention and control practices are adhered to. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - Ensuring all toys used at the centre are made of material that can be cleaned and disinfected (i.e., avoid plush toys);
 - Increasing the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting objects, toys and frequently touched surfaces;
 - [Frequently touched surfaces](#) are most likely to become contaminated, including doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, and tabletops, and must be disinfected at least twice a day;
 - Using only disinfectants that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). Low-level hospital grade disinfectants may be used;
 - Checking expiry dates of products and always following the manufacturer's instructions;
 - Performing proper hand washing (including assisting children with hand washing); and
 - Incorporating additional hand washing opportunities into the daily schedule.
 - It is recommended that operators keep a hard copy of a daily cleaning and disinfecting log to track and demonstrate cleaning schedules.
2. How can operators clean and disinfect surfaces or items?
 - When cleaning and disinfecting surfaces and/or items remember to:
 - **Clean.** It is important to clean articles first with soap and warm water to remove any visible dirt before using the disinfectant.
 - **Rinse.** Rinse items with clear water. Disinfectants do not work effectively unless soap or detergent is removed.
 - **Disinfect.** A commercial disinfectant or household bleach may be used to kill viruses.
 - **Contact time.** Contact time is the amount of time that a product must remain on the surface in order to kill the virus. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for recommended contact time.

- **Wash hands.** After cleaning and/or removing gloves, wash hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60 – 90% alcohol.
3. How can operators clean toys to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 virus?
 - Toys that have been mouthed should be washed and disinfected between users. Toys that come in contact with children’s mouths should be rinsed after disinfecting.
 - Wash, then disinfect hard surfaced toys (plastic, rubber) with either a commercial disinfectant or chlorine bleach solution.
 - Toys that are dishwasher-safe may also be cleaned in the dishwasher.
 4. What other steps can operators take to help stop the transmission of COVID-19?
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand rub with 60-90% alcohol;
 - Cough and sneeze into your sleeve or tissue;
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth without having washed your hands;
 - Stay at home if ill; and,
 - Frequently clean commonly touched surface.

Staffing

1. Can staff work in more than one classroom?
 - To limit the spread of COVID-19, ideally staff should limit their work to one classroom. Children and educators together are to form one cohort, with no more than 10 people, for a minimum of 10 days. Staff should work at only one location.
 - Supervisors and/or designates should limit their movement between rooms.
2. Can a supply staff work with different cohorts during the week?
 - No. One supply teacher can be part of only one cohort for a minimum of seven days. Changes to the cohort should be minimized wherever possible.
3. Are mixed age groupings allowed?
 - Mixed age groupings are permitted as set out in the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*, where a Director’s Approval has been granted and is identified on the centre license.
4. Have ratios changed?
 - Ratios have not changed and must be maintained as set out under the *Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA), 2014*.
 - In accordance with [Ministry of Education Operational Guidance from June 9, 2020](#), the maximum cohort size per classroom will be at no more than 10 individuals, space permitting. This includes children and staff.
 - Reduced ratios are permitted as set out under the CCEYA provided cohorts are not mixed with other cohorts. Groups of children cannot be combined at the beginning and/or the end of the day. Children and staff must remain with their cohort for a minimum of seven days.

- Reduced ratios are not permitted at any time for infants.
5. Can Director Approvals for staff be transferred from one child care centre to another child care centre that is operated by the same licensee?
 - Yes, if operators have a Director's Approval for staff at one centre, and wanted the specific staff member to work at another location, operators are not required to submit a new Director's Approval request to the Child Care Licensing System.
 - Operators should inform their Program Advisor, Child Care Quality and Assurance and Licensing Branch, if they would like to have staff work at an alternate location.
 6. Will a staff who covers another staff during a lunch or break also be considered part of the cohort of 10?
 - No. Cover offs can happen although they should be avoided. Due to the shorter duration of time for coverage, staff should be able to maintain physical distancing. Physical distancing and masks are recommended for staff who are covering these periods of time.
 7. When will the cohorting restrictions change?
 - The Ministry of Education has advised that there are plans to review the guidelines in August.

Screening

1. Who should be screened before entering the child care centre?
 - All individuals, including children, parents/guardians, staff and essential visitors must be screened upon arrival.
 - Parents /guardians should drop-off and pick up their child outside the child care setting unless it is determined that there is a need for the parent/guardian to enter the setting.
 - There should be no non-essential visitors in the centre.
2. Do staff need to wear personal protective equipment when screening individuals?
 - Yes. Screeners should be wearing personal protective equipment such as, surgical/procedure mask; and eye protection (goggles or face shield). A gown and gloves could also be worn for additional protection.
 - Screeners should take appropriate precautions when screening, including maintaining a distance of at least two meters (6 feet) from those being screened, or being separated by a physical barrier (such as a plexiglass barrier).
 - Operators and providers are required to keep attendance records of arrival and departure times of all people entering the centre.
3. Who should be denied entry to the child care setting?
 - Children, staff, and essential visitors who fail the entrance screen are not allowed into the child care setting/home.

- Do not permit children, staff, or essential visitors who are ill to enter into the child care setting.

Classroom Programming

1. How can operators encourage physical space between children?
 - It is difficult to encourage physical distancing with young children. However, there are different activities operators and providers can undertake to support physical distancing, such as:
 - Spreading children out into different areas, particularly at meal and dressing time;
 - Incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children (for example prepare separate art kits for each child);
 - Using visual cues to promote physical distancing (for example tape markings with arrows/circles on the floor, signs promoting physical distancing);
 - Where possible, offer more activities outside to allow for more space.
 - In shared outdoor space, cohorts must maintain a distance of at least 2 meters between groups and other individuals outside of the cohort.
2. What types of activities should operators avoid?
 - Operators and providers should avoid activities to reduce the spread of COVID-19 such as:
 - Do not use water or sensory tables or outdoor sandboxes;
 - Avoid singing activities indoors; and,
 - Do not use community playgrounds; however outdoor play at licensed child care sites is encouraged in small groups to support physical distancing.
3. Are there new requirements for meal time?
 - Yes. There are new requirements for mealtime. If meals or snacks are provided, operators must ensure each child has their own individual meal or snack. Children are not permitted to self-serve; meals should be served in individual portions to children. Additionally,
 - Multi-use utensils must be sanitized; and
 - “No food sharing” policies should be reinforced.
 - Children must not be allowed to share soothers, bottles, sippy cups, toothbrushes, facecloths, etc. Label these items with the child’s name to discourage accidental sharing.
4. Are there new requirements for rest time?
 - Yes. At rest times operators and providers should increase the distance between cribs and cots, if possible. If space is tight, children can be placed head-to-toe or toe-to-toe.
 - Operators should consider removing cribs or placing infants in every other crib to support physical distancing. Cribs and cots should be disinfected after

each use. Please refer to section 4 of the [Ministry of Education's Child Care Centre Licensing Manual \(September 2019\)](#) for more information.

- Linens must be laundered on a daily basis.
5. Can educators pick up and/or soothe children?
- Yes, educators can still pick up and soothe children to support a nurturing environment. When holding infants and toddlers, blankets or cloths should be used over child care providers' clothing. The blankets or cloths should be changed between children.
 - Educators should try to avoid getting close to faces of all children, where possible.

Supporting Families with the New Normal

1. How should operators communicate with families?
- When communicating with families, be respectful of their current realities. For example, some families may not have time to chat at drop-off, or some might be later than usual picking up their child(ren). It is important with the changes that families will experience during re-opening, that they continue to feel that they belong, can contribute to their children's learning, and are engaged in meaningful ways with the child care centre. Consider reaching out to your families in a virtual manner to keep them connected with the centre.
 - Communication about the child's health is crucial. If a child is feeling unwell or showing symptoms, be sure to follow protocols when a child or staff/home child care provider has symptoms of illness or becomes sick [Ministry of Education Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) (page 12). Communicate all relevant information with families as soon as possible.
2. What supports can operators offer to families?
- Get to know new families to the best of your ability and build respectful and responsive relationships, as you normally would.
 - Be there to support children and families, while remembering that we are not the experts on what is unfolding with the pandemic nor are we experts on mental health.
 - Refer a child or family that is struggling to [Reach Out Centre for Kids \(ROCK\)](#), if the child and family would benefit from some additional support.

Before and After School

1. What information is available to support before and after programs for school aged children?
- The Ministry of Education has advised that operational guidelines for before and after school programs will be available in time for September.

Summer Day Camps

1. What guidelines would operators follow to operate a Summer Day Camp?

- The Ministry of Health released a [COVID-19 guidance document for summer day camps](#). The guidance includes requirements for health and safety, screening, management of participants with COVID-19 symptoms, testing for COVID-19, and occupational health and safety.

Useful links:

- [Halton Region COVID-19 \(2019 Novel Coronavirus\)](#)
- [Government of Canada Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\): Outbreak update](#)
- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms](#)
- [Ministry of Education Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak - Child Care Re-Opening](#)
- [Ministry of Health COVID-19 Provincial Testing Guidance Update](#)
- [Government Personal Protective Equipment \(PPE\) Directory](#)
- [ROCK Resource Kit for Families Ages 0-6](#)
- [Zero to Three At-Home Activity Guide](#)
- College of Early Childhood Educators [COVID-19 heroes: RECEs in emergency care](#)
- College of Early Childhood Educators [COVID-19 FAQs for Members](#)