

GUIDANCE FOR LICENSED FAMILY DAY HOME/GROUP FAMILY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

Overview

By implementing good public health practices, businesses and entities can reduce transmission of infections such as COVID-19, 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:

- implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees such as staying home when sick, washing or sanitizing your hands often and practicing good respiratory etiquette;
- provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- ensure that attendees maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene; and
- complying, to the extent possible, with any applicable Alberta Health guidance found at on the COVID-19 info for Albertans [website](#).

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 Guidance for COVID-19 and other Respiratory Illnesses](#). All Albertans are required to follow all applicable Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) Orders including the continued requirement for isolation.

This document has been developed to support operators of licensed family day homes and licensed group family child care programs in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19 as well as other infections among attendees (children, adolescents, adults, parents, guardians, staff and volunteers). This guidance builds upon the [Alberta Health Services \(AHS\) Health and Safety Childcare Guidelines](#), which all child care operators are required to follow.

All licensed group family child care programs and licensed family day home programs will also be required to be in compliance with applicable zoning and health and safety legislation, including the [Early Learning and Child Care Act](#), Early Learning and Child Care Regulation (or *Child Care Licensing Act* and Child Care Licensing Regulation, for group family child care programs), and/or [Alberta's Family Day Home Standards](#).

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance

- Program educators are encouraged to review and follow the [General Guidance for COVID-19 and other Respiratory Illnesses](#).
- Program educators should notify families of the steps being taken to prevent the risk of transmission, and the importance of their roles in these measures.
- Where possible, practices that encourage spacing should occur, for example:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes ○ Plan for spaced activities. ○ Consider ways to set up rooms to avoid clustering or congestion.
<p>Screening and Response Plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff, parents/guardians and children must not attend the program if they have COVID-19 symptoms. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individuals are legally required to isolate for 10 days if they have tested positive or have any core symptoms that are not related to a pre-existing illness or health condition. ○ Although, close contacts of positive cases are no longer legally required to quarantine, it is strongly recommended that all unvaccinated household contacts of a person infected with COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A household contact is defined as a person who lives in the same residence as the case OR who has been in frequent, long-duration, close-range interaction with the person who tested positive. ▪ This definition would include unvaccinated childcare staff who provide direct care for children who are unable to implement good standards of respiratory hygiene (e.g. unable to perform appropriate hand washing, covering coughs/sneezes, using and disposing of tissues). ● Before leaving home, staff and children who will enter the family day home program or group family child care program, should self-screen or be screened by a parent/guardian for symptoms each day that they enter the home using the applicable checklist for their age group (Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist or Adult Alberta Health Daily Checklist). ● Providers must not open their home for child care if they or anyone else residing in the home has symptoms of COVID-19. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The symptomatic person or persons must be tested for COVID-19. ○ If the person(s) is negative for COVID-19, the day home may re-open once the symptoms have resolved. ○ If the COVID-19 test is positive, the day home must remain closed during the legal isolation period for the case. ● The program educators should ask parents/guardians if the child is feeling well. ● Parents/guardians should be provided a copy of the Child Alberta Health Daily Checklist upon registration. ● Operators are encouraged to set an expectation with parents/guardians that the checklist should be completed on a daily basis.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 use 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. • 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). • Programs directly associated with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 should follow routine public guidance, including accessing testing if individuals are symptomatic.
<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 having one designated parent/guardian pick up and drop off each child, staggering entry, or limiting the numbers of people in entry areas. • Day home agency consultants visiting licensed provider homes must wear a mask, and should wash their hands (or use hand sanitizer) when entering or exiting the day home.
<p>Hand Hygiene</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hand sanitizer should be placed in convenient locations throughout the home, but be kept out of the unsupervised reach of children. • Programs must adhere to handwashing guidelines outlined in the AHS Health and Safety Guidelines for Child Care Facilities. <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 and the spread of microorganisms when hand washing is not possible. • If parents/guardians have questions about their child using alcohol-based hand sanitizer, they should contact the child care program to discuss potential alternatives.
<p>Additional Public Health Measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program educators are required to wear a mask, except in circumstances where wearing a mask impedes the staff member’s ability to provide care to a child.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children attending a family day home or group family child care program are not required to wear a mask while at child care but should be supported to wear one if their parent/guardian prefers. • Alberta Health mask guidance should be followed and can be found here: www.alberta.ca/masks. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Once a disposable mask has been removed, it should be thrown in a lined trash bin or if it is a reusable mask, it should be placed in a sealed container to be laundered. • 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). ○ Hold activities outdoors as much as possible. ○ Organizations providing off-site activities should develop procedures to address staff or children that become symptomatic during the field trip. Plans should include a designated area to isolate the ill individual, what extra supplies may be needed (e.g., face mask for the child, mask/face shield for the individual attending to the child), how to notify a parent/guardian and how the ill 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.
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When organizing and participating in activities with children 11 and under, child care providers should review the Stage 3: Guidance for Activities with Children 11 and Under and select measures, as appropriate, to implement in their activity, as appropriate.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family day home providers and group child care program staff are expected to follow provincial masking laws if using public transit, taxis or commercial ride shares. • If a child becomes symptomatic during the trip, a face mask should be made available. The driver will contact the day home 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"> ○ Enhance the frequency of cleaning and disinfection of 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.

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Cleaning and Disinfecting Items	<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.○ A domestic dishwasher with a sanitizing cycle.○ If using a dishwasher without a sanitizing cycle, wipe/spray/immerse/rinse the toys in disinfectant after the dishwasher cycle is completedOR<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Wash with detergent and water;2. Rinse with clean warm water;3. Wipe, spray or immerse for 2 minutes in an approved disinfectant. Toys that may be mouthed by young children should be rinsed prior to disinfecting if using 1000 ppm bleach or another non-food grade disinfectant is used; and,4. Air dry.• Increased frequency of cleaning of soft furnishings, permanent carpets and upholstered furniture is recommended.• Ensure mouthed toys are immediately set aside (e.g., put into a designated bucket) until cleaned and disinfected.• Soft toys (plush toys and blankets) should be laundered in hot water and dried thoroughly between children.• If coat hooks, lockers or open cubbies are to be use to store personal items they should be assigned to a single child or they should 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.
Overnight Child Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Before offering overnight care, operators should consult with Children’s Services and Alberta Health Services to assess respiratory illness risk specific to their overnight program and collectively determine if additional measures are needed to minimize risk of transmission during overnight care.• Program educators providing overnight care should ensure beds or cots for children from different households are spaced apart (i.e., arranged at a minimum of 2 meters apart where possible).

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Other Resources

- 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>

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

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