

GUIDANCE FOR PRESCHOOLS

Overview

Under current Chief Medical Officer of Health Orders, businesses and entities are required to:

- implement practices to minimize the risk of transmission of infection among attendees;
- provide procedures for rapid response if an attendee develops symptoms of illness;
- ensure that attendees maintain high levels of sanitation and personal hygiene;
- comply, to the extent possible, with the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#), this guidance, and any other applicable Alberta Health guidance found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/biz-connect.aspx>.

This document has been developed to support licensed preschools in reducing the risk of transmission of COVID-19. This guidance builds upon the [Alberta Health Services Health and Safety Child care Guidelines](#). All re-opened licensed preschools will also be required to be in compliance with applicable zoning, health and safety legislation, including the [Child Care Licensing Act](#) and/or [Child Care Licensing Regulation](#).

In the event of a conflict between this document and the AHS Health and Safety Child care Guidelines, this document will prevail.

This document and the guidance within it is subject to change and will be updated as needed. Current information related to COVID-19 can be found at: <https://www.alberta.ca/covid-19-information.aspx>.

COVID-19 Risk Mitigation

General Guidance

- Operators should review the [COVID-19 General Relaunch Guidance](#) for considerations prior to reopening
- Operators should encourage and facilitate families of attendees staying up to date with developments related to [COVID-19](#).
- 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.
 - COVID-19 signage should be posted in highly visible locations:
 - “Help prevent the spread” posters are [available](#).
 - When possible, provide necessary information in languages that are preferred by attendees.
- All Albertans must follow CMOH Order 05-2020, which establishes legal requirements for quarantine and isolation.
 - Anyone with symptoms of COVID-19, with a history of international travel in the last 14 days, or with close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the past 14 days must remain at home.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Signs should be posted at the entrance reminding persons not to enter if they have signs or symptoms of COVID-19. • Activities cannot violate a public health order. To help plan activities, staff should ask themselves the following questions to determine the risk of the activities and whether they are allowed to proceed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Does the activity involve shared surfaces or objects frequently touched by hands? ○ Can an activity be modified to increase opportunities for physical distancing? • 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 and where possible, avoid activities that require clustering around a particular item or part of the room. ○ Consider ways to set up rooms to avoid clustering or congestion. ○ Consider staggering individual participation in activities or use of equipment to avoid clustering in any specific area. ○ For naps, increase distance between sleeping mats/cots up to 2 meters if possible, and always practice head-to-toe placement. • Operators should develop a plan to provide isolation for an attendee if needed.
<p>Screening and response plan</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff, parents and children must not enter the preschool space if they have COVID symptoms. • Before every shift, child care providers are expected to assess themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 using the Alberta Health Daily Checklist. • The preschool is expected to ask parents to check children’s temperatures daily before coming to the program. Parents should be reminded of this requirement when children are first registered for the preschool program, and through visible signage at the entrance to the preschool. For reference, normal temperatures are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 for children under 2 years): 35.8-38.0°C (96.4-100.4°F) ○ Forehead: 36.6-38.0°C (97.9-100.4°F)

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- Parents should be provided a copy of the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#) upon registration in a child care program with the expectation that it needs to be completed on a daily basis.
- Before leaving home, the parent or guardian conducting drop off is expected to screen each child for symptoms using the [Alberta Health Daily Checklist](#).
- If a child develops symptoms while at the facility, the child should be isolated in a separate room and the parent 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 meters 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 the child. Staff should wear a non-medical mask and eye protection during all interactions with the child and should avoid contact with the child's respiratory secretions.
 - Staff should wash their hands before donning a non-medical mask and before and after removing the non-medical 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 symptom onset 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) should be removed from the centre and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 72 hours.
- Parents can access COVID-19 [testing](#) for their child (with or without symptoms) by filling out the [AHS Online Assessment Tool](#) and booking a test.
- Proof of a negative COVID-19 test result is not necessary to return to child care.
 - A child that has a cough, fever, shortness of breath, runny nose or sore throat that is not related to a pre-existing health condition or who tests positive for COVID-19 is legally required to [isolate](#) for 10 days from the start of their symptoms, or until symptoms resolve, whichever takes longer.
 - If a child has a fever, cough, runny nose, shortness of breath or sore throat and is not tested for COVID-19, the child must be isolated for 10 days from symptom onset, or until symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. NOTE: It is always recommended that the parent seek testing for a child with symptoms of COVID-19.
 - If the child tested negative and has no known exposure to the virus, they must stay home until their symptoms resolve. If the

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	<p>child tested negative and has had an exposure to the virus, they are legally required to quarantine for 14 days from the exposure date.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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, chronic cough), the child should be tested for COVID-19 to confirm that it is not the source of their symptoms before entering or returning to the program. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A child that has tested negative for COVID-19 does not need to be retested unless new or different symptoms develop. • AHS Coordinated COVID-19 Response is available to all child care settings at 1-844-343-0971. They must be contacted, as soon as there are two or more children/staff members showing COVID-19 symptoms, for additional guidance and decision- making support at a site that does not already have an outbreak of COVID-19. <p>Programs directly associated with a confirmed or probable case of COVID-19 must adhere to requirements from Alberta Health Services. This may include temporary program closure to allow for contact tracing processes to occur.</p>
<p>Entering and exiting the centre</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs should develop procedures for drop off and pick up that support physical distancing and separate cohorts to the greatest extent possible. Possible strategies include separate cohort 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 an attendee tests positive, programs should keep daily records of anyone entering the program who stays for 15 minutes or longer (e.g. staff working each day, children, etc.). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programs must obtain a parent or guardian consent (for children under 18) and notify parents or guardians about the purpose and legal authority for the collection. ○ Any personal information that is collected for COVID-19 contact tracing can only be used for this purpose, unless an individual provides their consent. ○ Records should only be kept for 4 weeks. An organization must make reasonable security arrangements to protect the personal information. ○ Program attendance needs to be reported weekly to the Ministry of Children’s Services. ○ For more information, the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner has released Pandemic FAQ: Customer Lists about

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	<p>collecting personal information from customers during the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There should be no non-essential visitors at the program. Parents or guardians are able to enter the program when needed, but should minimize the time spent there, wear a non-medical mask and stay two meters away from staff and other children at all times. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Parent or guardian volunteers that count toward required staffing ratios are not recommended. However, if they are required, they are expected to wear a non-medical mask at all times when in the presence of staff and children. ○ Facility operators and staff should use telephone or video conferencing when possible to meet with staff and parents. ○ Parents picking up children from more than one cohort at the centre should not be allowed to enter the cohort room unless absolutely necessary. If they must enter, a distance of two meters must be maintained between staff and other children. • Hand sanitizer should be placed in all entrances to the program area for use by staff, parents doing pick-ups/drop-offs, and any visitors to the centre. Dispensers should not be in locations that can be accessed by children as there is a risk of accidental ingestion. The manufacturer's instructions for each product must be followed. • Signs should be posted at the entrance reminding persons not to enter if they have signs of COVID-19.
<p>Cohorts</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preschool programs may operate in cohorts of 30 people. This includes both staff and children. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ A cohort is defined as a group of children and staff members assigned to them who stay together throughout the day, as well as day to day. Cohorts should remain as stable as possible over an extended period. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Children may be enrolled in multiple programs, and would be considered to be a part of more than one cohort (e.g. for part-time child care programs, one cohort on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and a different cohort on Tuesday and Thursdays). Parents should consider limiting the number of cohorts as much as possible. ○ Staff may only be assigned to one cohort, even if the program operates half-day classes. This means that the total number of people in all classes supervised by a single staff member (half day or otherwise) cannot exceed 30. If a staff member must work with more than one cohort (i.e. multiple classes of 30 people), they are expected to wear a non-medical mask at all times.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Cohorts cannot mix with other cohorts or be within in the same room/space at the same time, including pickups and drop-offs, mealtimes, playtime, outdoor activities, staff rooms, naptime, etc. ○ Separate cohort groups may be divided by non-permeable physical barriers (e.g. bookshelves, plastic room dividers, cabinets,). These barriers must be at least 2 metres high or 2 metres apart. ● In order to ensure that preschool programs maintain licensing requirements for child/staff ratios, allow coverage for staff lunch and coffee breaks, and to protect the separation between cohorts, preschool operators should adopt the following staffing practices: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Designated room staff are assigned a cohort and should stay with that cohort and not interact with staff or children from any other cohort. ○ Where possible to do so and maintain ratio requirements, programs should avoid having substitute or “float” staff that work with multiple cohorts. ○ If float staff members are required to maintain adequate coverage, each float staff person should be assigned to no more than three designated cohorts and should limit physical interactions with children where possible (e.g. maintaining two metres of physical distance). ● Any person (director, float staff, etc.) who will enter the space of more than one1 cohort is expected to wear a non-medical mask any time they are in the presence of other staff/children and they should wash their hands (or use hand sanitizer) when entering or exiting each room. Information on how to use a non-medical mask can be found here: www.alberta.ca/masks.
<p>Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Staff and children should be frequently reminded to follow proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette (wash hands frequently, sneeze/cough into their elbow, put used tissues in a waste receptacle and wash hands immediately after using tissues). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Post signs with visual cues around the program area to remind staff and children to perform proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. ● Preschool programs must adhere to handwashing guidelines outlined in the AHS Health and Safety Guidelines Child Care Guidelines. Hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol is recommended as there is evidence that supports effectiveness against COVID-19. Hand sanitizer can help reduce the risk of infection by, or spread of microorganisms when hand washing is not possible. If parents have questions about their

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	<p>child using alcohol-based hand sanitizer they should contact the preschool operator to discuss potential alternatives.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to hand sanitizer needs to be monitored at all times because it can result in accidental poisoning if ingested. Children should be closely supervised when using alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Manufacturer instructions for each product should be followed.
<p>Additional public health measures</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of non-medical masks by program staff is only encouraged for prolonged close interactions with children (e.g. assisting with feeding). <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If non-medical masks are worn, Alberta Health mask guidance should be followed and can be found here: www.alberta.ca/masks. ○ Once a non-medical 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). ○ Children attending a preschool program are not required to wear a mask while at preschool. • Field trips that require group transportation, holiday events, performances or celebrations must be postponed or cancelled until further notice, as these events offer fewer possibilities for physical distancing and may lead to the mingling of cohorts or exposure to new people/places that may pose a risk of transmission. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Programs should consider activities outside of the preschool setting that can be accessed by walking, are primarily outdoors and that do not mix cohorts (e.g. a public park or playground).
<p>Food</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Food provided by the family should be stored with the child’s belongings or, if refrigeration is required, should be kept in an area designated for the child’s cohort and should not be handled by other cohorts’ staff. • Close off kitchen/nourishment areas that could be accessed by children, non-designated staff, or essential visitors. • Ensure that food handling staff practice meticulous hand hygiene and are excluded from work if they are symptomatic. • Where possible, children should practice physical distancing while eating. • There should be no common food items (e.g., salt and pepper shakers). • Meals should be served in individual portions by a designated staff member to each child. • Utensils should be used to serve food items (not fingers).
<p>Staff</p>	<p>Ensure staff:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are trained on the preschool operator’s policies regarding physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, cleaning and disinfecting,

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	<p>and any other updated policies or procedures related to preventing transmission of COVID-19.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have access to hand sanitizer or hand washing stations, as required. • Are permitted to wear non-medical masks if preferred, even if a non-medical mask is not necessary for the work they are performing. Guidance is available online. • Designate lockers and storage spaces to individual staff. • Encourage staff to launder uniforms between shifts as appropriate. • Continue to follow existing occupational health and safety (OHS) requirements. <p>OHS questions and concerns can be directed to the OHS Contact Centre by telephone at 1-866-415-8690 (in Alberta) or 780-415-8690 (in Edmonton) or online.</p>
<p>Use of shared spaces</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared spaces, structures and toys that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between cohorts should not be used. • If more than one cohort will be using the same space, the entire space, toys and all surfaces are expected to be cleaned and disinfected between group use, • If play structures are to be used by more than one group, the structures can only be used by one cohort at a time and when possible should be cleaned and disinfected before and after use by each cohort. • Only one cohort at a time may use a licensed outdoor play space. Programs are encouraged to also use alternatives to licensed outdoor play spaces, such as walks and supervised play in parks and safe open spaces. 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. • Each cohort should have designated equipment (e.g., balls, loose equipment) or clean and disinfect equipment between cohort uses. • Naps should take place within the cohort’s designated room. • The centre should establish a plan to prevent mingling of cohorts in washrooms and no unnecessary items should be stored in washrooms. • Programs that utilize a space that has other after-hour 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 within the cohort directly before the group enters the space and after it exits the space. A cleaning log should be posted and used to track cleaning.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs that are located in seniors centres that do not have the ability to operate as a stand-alone program (separate entrance, separate washrooms, and separate play areas) will not be able to open. • Where provided, water fountains may remain open and should be cleaned and disinfected frequently.
<p>Cleaning and disinfecting items</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Programs should engage in frequent, thorough cleaning and disinfecting between each cohort using a space. • 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 OR : ○ Wash with detergent and water ○ Rinse with clean warm water ○ Wipe, spray or immerse for 2 minutes in an approved disinfectant ○ Air dry • Discontinue shared use of items that cannot be cleaned and disinfected. • Area rugs and soft furnishings (e.g. large pillows or cushions, bean bag chairs, couches) that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected should be removed. Increased frequency of cleaning of permanent carpets is recommended (i.e. weekly steam cleaning). • Ensure mouthed toys are immediately put into a designated bucket to be cleaned and disinfected. • Soft toys (plush toys and blankets) should not be shared at this time. Launder in hot water and dry thoroughly between children or discontinue use. • Close all shared sensory tables including water tables, sand tables, shared play dough. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Individual sensory bins or activities that are not shared between children may be used (play dough labelled for individual child use, small individual water bowl with sensory activities). • Items such as books and puzzles that cannot be fully cleaned and disinfected should not be used unless the items can be assigned to a set cohort. • Regarding items that travel with the child from home to the preschool on a daily or regular basis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Children bringing in non-essential personal items should be

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	<p>discouraged.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 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 must 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>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