

**Coronavirus (COVID-19) Early Learning and Child Care  
Practice Guidance  
May 2021**

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## **Updates**

[September 23, 2020]

[May 18, 2021]

Manitoba Families is committed to providing updated information as it becomes available through this practice guide. For the most up to date general information and public health direction, please refer to [www.manitoba.ca/covid19](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19).

All updates will be highlighted in this section and integrated into this practice guide and shared with facilities.

### **May 18, 2021:**

- Revised prolonged close contact reduced from 15 minutes to 10 minutes on pages 5, 6 and 7
- Revised Personal Protective Equipment section on page 15
- Medical-Grade Mask section added on page 16
- Revised Mask and Eye Protection Supply section on page 18
- Revised Documentation section on page 18
- Revised Appendix A – COVID-19 Incident Reporting Form

## Public Health Resources

The COVID-19 situation continues to evolve in Manitoba. The provincial website [www.manitoba.ca/covid19](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19) will continue to provide up-to-date information, so please check this site regularly.

All screening that identifies suspected cases of COVID-19 should be referred to Health Links at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257.

## Prevention Measures

All facilities providing child care must continue to follow applicable health and safety legislation to ensure the safety, health and well-being of children. This includes all standards within The Community Child Care Standards Act and Child Care Regulation, and guidelines within the Best Practices Licensing Manual for Early Learning and Child Care Centres.

The safety and wellness of staff is paramount. The following modifications are applicable to current policy and practice requirements. These instructions will be adapted as Manitoba Health, Seniors and Active Living (MHSAL) guidance to Manitobans evolves. Additional information will also be provided through circulars from the Child and Youth Services Division.

Facilities should strengthen communication strategies (including [signage](#)) about when to stay home.

Individuals should refer to the COVID-19 screening checklist daily as changes are made as the situation evolves:

[https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/covid19\\_screening\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf)

If the screening checklist has advised you not to enter the child care facility, please self-isolate and call Health Links or go to the online screening tool located at:

<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>

An up-to-date list of symptoms can be found at

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/about/index.html>

## Screening

Screening for symptoms is important to identify any potential cases of COVID-19 as quickly as possible, before exposure to others.

## Staff

No staff member who has symptoms or is otherwise required to self-isolate should enter a child care centre. In addition, staff should self-monitor daily for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. Staff that have an elevated temperature or any symptoms of COVID-19 must stay home, isolate and be excluded from work. Facilities must maintain records of staff absenteeism.

## Children

Child care centres should develop a plan to clearly communicate to families the need to monitor their child daily for symptoms before sending them to child care. [Signage](#) with exclusion criteria should be posted at all entrances to the facility.

A child who meets any of the exclusion criteria will not be admitted to the centre and will be advised to immediately isolate and consult Health Links - Info Santé or their health care provider. Those with symptoms should be tested, and if negative for COVID-19 they can return 24 hours after symptoms resolve. If individuals choose not to be tested, they should isolate for 10 days from symptom onset, and may return if symptoms have resolved at that time.

Parents/guardians should be asked daily to confirm that their child has no symptoms and is not otherwise required to self-isolate. Child care centres are not required to screen children for specific symptoms or take temperatures of children upon arrival.

A chronic stable cough, sneeze, runny nose, or nasal congestion that is unchanged and clearly linked to a known medical condition such as asthma or allergies is not an absolute requirement for exclusion. As well, children who are crying or teething can exhibit a runny nose. Changing or worsening of chronic symptoms requires isolation and contacting Health Links - Info Santé. Child care providers should exercise judgment related to symptoms but when in doubt, err on the side of caution, exclude the child and advise the parent/guardian to contact Health Links – Info Santé or their health care provider.

Guidelines may change based on emerging circumstances and information from public health officials. Visit [www.manitoba.ca/covid19](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19) for information on prevention, and updates on the evolving situation.

**Temperature Measurement:** Routine screening or monitoring of temperatures with a thermometer or other device to assess for fever is not recommended. Normal temperatures can be variable throughout the day and can be different between individuals. We recommend that parents and staff focus on monitoring for symptoms of COVID-19 as outlined in the Screening Checklist  
[https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/covid19\\_screening\\_checklist.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf)

## Visitor Access

Visitors or volunteers are permitted. Parents/guardians are able to volunteer but must adhere to physical distancing, recommended hygiene practices and wearing a mask, when on the premises. Other volunteers are permitted, but it is recommended that these are limited to those who regularly volunteer to minimize the number of possible exposures outside the centre.

Before entering a child care centre, visitors should be directed to complete the screening checklist to confirm that they have no symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and are not required to self-isolate. Visitors with any symptoms consistent with COVID-19 should not enter the child care setting. Child care settings are required to keep a list of all essential visitors that entered the facility with confirmation that they have been screened.

## **Public Health Measures**

COVID-19 is most commonly spread from an infected person through respiratory droplets generated through coughing, sneezing, laughing, singing, and talking. It spreads more easily when contact is close (within six feet/two metres) and prolonged (more than 10 minutes). COVID -19 can also be spread by close personal contact such as touching or shaking hands or touching something with the virus on it and then touching one's mouth, nose or eyes before cleaning one's hands. Some people who have few or no symptoms can spread COVID-19.

Although public health measures can significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 entering and being transmitted in child care settings, the risk is never zero. It is important to remember that while children tend to have less severe disease, this is not always the case. COVID-19 can also cause more severe illness among people who are 60 years of age and older, and those who have weakened immune systems or underlying medical conditions. Children under one year of age and those with immune suppression and chronic medical conditions are considered more vulnerable and at higher risk for severe illness. Parents/guardians and staff are encouraged to consult with their health care provider if they have concerns about their own health, their child's health, or health of other household contacts.

The most effective measures to reduce the spread of COVID-19 include separating people by maintaining physical distance and the use of physical barriers. However, these measures are not always practical in child care settings. Therefore it is most effective to use a layered approach including multiple measures from the areas listed below, and to develop administrative measures that support individuals to consistently follow personal preventive practices (e.g., environmental cleaning, conducting frequent hand hygiene) that decrease the number of interactions while increasing the safety of interactions that occur. Adapted responses and recommendations may be required in situations where health, age, ability, status, or other socio-economic and demographic circumstances may limit the ability of some groups or individuals to follow the recommended measures.

Staff and children can take actions to limit the spread of COVID-19. Some of these are already part of the quality care provided through facility programs. However, special attention should be used to ensure they are followed.

**Physical (social) distancing:** Physical distancing of two metres/six feet between all individuals should occur whenever reasonably possible in a child care setting. This is applicable for both indoor and outdoor play, and during pickup and drop-offs. If maintaining distancing in a group is challenging due to the children's ages, then it is reasonable for individuals to be closer to one another when necessary (i.e. a staff member may need to be closer to a child to maintain line of site when moving a group or at nap time) as long as physical distancing between groups is maintained.

Where physical distancing cannot be maintained between individual children, it is important to maintain at least four meters between groups or cohorts of children (i.e. two groups of children can be in the same room provided the groups do not intermingle and provided four metres of space is maintained between the two groups).

When working in this setting:

- Children with no symptoms should continue to be treated as they typically would be treated by staff, but with physical distancing in place as much as possible.

- Where possible, arrange spaces to encourage the recommended separation. For example, spacing children to avoid close contact during meal and nap times, and assigning a designated chair and table for each child.
- Signage should be posted to promote physical distancing. Remember that young children need easy to understand visual prompts. For example, use tape on the floor, hoops, mats or other items that can mark off personal space. Another idea is to organize play activities with a visual cue about how many children should be in that area (e.g., two chairs next to an activity with markers or numbers taped to the floor).
- Minimize the number of individuals entering the facility by having only one family member pickup and drop off their child(ren). Where appropriate, consider doing drop off and pick up outside the facility, implement a practice of staggered drop off and pick up times, or use separate entrances (if feasible).
- Stagger staff break times.
- Physical barriers can be used when physical distancing cannot be maintained, where appropriate. Consider the need for additional cleaning and sanitizing of any barriers or dividers.

Plan for play experiences that help children learn why it is important to maintain appropriate distance between each child. Depending on the age of children, possible activities include:

- Use masking tape to create squares or other shapes that are two metres apart. Have children move from shape to shape while the music plays as a sort of musical chairs.
- For older children, introduce coding activities - e.g., set up a grid of two-metre sized squares, using masking tape. Count the squares, explore concepts of rows and columns, and then encourage children to take turns being the computer and the computer programmer. Consider using a variety of cards, including arrows.
- Provide measurement activities - e.g., provide yardsticks, measuring tapes or rulers (which can be taped together). In absence of these, use lengths of cardboard pre-measured into metre-long lengths, or yarn or rope cut in pre-measured lengths. Measure tables, distance between, etc.
- Promote gross motor measuring activities involving different lengths.
- Play “What time is it, Mr. Wolf?” The wolf stands against a wall. A line on the floor indicates a two-metre distance from the wolf. Intersecting grid lines space children so that they are two metres apart. Alternatively, children can approach the wolf one at a time, while not going beyond the two-metre line.
- Set up a ball or bean bag toss, with the line two metres out from a target bucket.

**Cohorting/Grouping:** If groups can be kept separate, then child care centres may operate at full capacity, even if the total number of children (adding up all groups) exceeds the maximum under current public health orders for indoor and outdoor settings.

The maximum number of individuals congregating (i.e. close interactions between people longer than 10 minutes) in a common space for indoor and outdoor settings must comply with the most up to date public health orders (<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/soe.html#current>). Minimizing in the use of common spaces wherever possible will help reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

The following guidelines should be followed:

- Where physical distancing cannot be maintained between individual children, it is important to maintain at least four meters between groups of children (preferred) or cohorts of children (i.e. two groups of children can be in the same room provided the groups do not intermingle and provided four metres of space is maintained between the two groups).
- Whenever possible, assign children and staff to a group and keep them together throughout the day.
- For childcare centres with larger total numbers of children on site, each cohort or maximum total group size should be no more than 30 children. Smaller group sizes are preferable.
- Where possible, staff and children should remain with the same group each day.
- Siblings should be grouped together when reasonable (e.g. siblings are within the same age range). Siblings are not required to physically distance from each other (e.g. siblings can hug, be within two metres/six feet of each other), even if they are in different groups within the childcare setting.
- Groups should not be in shared spaces (including indoor and outdoor, hallways, entrances, foyers) at the same time (e.g. stagger individual group times on the playground). Where this is not possible, physical distancing between groups is required.
- Child care settings should keep daily records that include the names of the children and staff participating in each group.
- Limit staff to one site, if possible.

Drop off and Pick up:

- Drop off and pick up of children should be staggered to avoid crowding. A maximum number of 25 at one time is suggested.
- When it is not possible to stagger pick up and drop off times at entrances and exits, then a greater number of individuals may use the same entrance or exit at the same time, as long as close interactions between individuals are brief (less than 10 minutes, ideally shorter).

**Hygiene Practices:** Handwashing with soap and water for at least 15 seconds is the recommended hand hygiene practice in child care. The use of alcohol based hand sanitizer can be used in the facility (see note below). Special attention will be paid to younger students to ensure they follow all safety procedures, such as wearing a mask and keeping their hands washed and sanitized.

Specifically, staff, volunteers and children must engage in frequent hand hygiene often, including but not limited to the following times:

- at the start of the day and before going home,
- after going to the washroom and helping children with washroom routines
- after a diaper change (both children and staff),
- before and after preparing food,
- before eating/drinking,
- after getting hands dirty or you feel they have become contaminated,

- after wiping nose or handling dirty tissues,
- after coughing, sneezing and blowing nose,
- after soothing a crying child, and
- after cleaning tasks (staff).

Note: Alcohol-based hand sanitizer should be kept out of reach of children, and used only under adult supervision. If hands are visibly soiled, they should be washed with soap and water rather than an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Provide sanitizer with a minimum alcohol concentration of 60 per cent in areas throughout the facility, such as entry points. Ensure these are situated so that children cannot access it without supervision.

Child care staff should help young children to ensure handwashing is done correctly. Good hygiene practices can be taught in a playful manner. One idea is to have timers to help ensure adequate time. See how many 15-second songs the children can identify. Be creative - engage the children in coming up with games and other ways to encourage everyone to wash their hands for 15 seconds.

Respiratory etiquette should be modeled, taught and reinforced regularly. This includes coughing and sneezing into a tissue or sleeve, as well as proper and prompt disposal of any used tissues followed by hand hygiene.

No personal items (e.g. hats, hair accessories, lip balm, food/drinks) should be shared. Avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes, and encourage children to do the same.

As part of these routine measures, signage should be posted and highly visible and include visual cues that remind staff and children to perform hand hygiene (e.g., sneezing or coughing into their elbow, putting used tissues in a waste receptacle and performing hand hygiene immediately after using tissues). Signs can be found at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/resources/pubs/posters.pdf> .

**Environmental Cleaning:** Child care facilities must engage in frequent, thorough cleaning and disinfection every day throughout the facility (including cribs, cots, toys and where possible outdoor play equipment). More frequent cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, railings, faucets, tables, light switches, electronics, etc.) is required (twice daily or more often as needed).

Please refer to the Best Practices Licensing Manual [https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/resources/pubs/elcc\\_manual.pdf](https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/resources/pubs/elcc_manual.pdf) for required cleaning and disinfection procedures.

Health Canada has a list of disinfectants shown to be effective against COVID-19 available at <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>.

Care providers are encouraged to review existing activities and practices within their settings to help determine where enhancements or increased cleaning frequencies may be beneficial. This includes limiting use of high touch objects and surfaces by multiple individuals (e.g.

providing children with their own containers of art and crafts materials that are not shared with others).

Waste should be disposed of regularly. Hand hygiene should be performed after waste removal. No-touch waste receptacles are preferred.

Increased monitoring of hand cleaning supplies is recommended to ensure all sinks in washrooms, kitchens and laundry areas are well-stocked with hand hygiene supplies at all times (i.e., soap, alcohol based hand sanitizer and single-use towels). This includes hand lotion to prevent dermatitis (i.e. dryness, irritation, itchy, cracked hands) and maintain a good skin barrier for healthy hands (including fingernails) and skin.

Public health recommends applying a fragrance-free moisturizer or barrier cream with Dimethicone, silicone, ceramides or ointment with petrolatum (*\*avoid use of petrolatum based hand lotion when using latex gloves*).

Follow a regular laundry schedule. Items/clothing should be laundered regularly in hot water and thoroughly dried. Soiled facility linens/towels should be laundered using regular laundry detergent and hot water. Any soiled bedding or clothing belonging to a child should be bagged and sent home with the family for laundering. If the laundry container comes in contact with contaminated laundry, it should be cleaned and disinfected. Perform hand hygiene after handling dirty laundry.

**Toys:** As per standard procedures, it is recommended that facilities have toys that are easily cleaned and disinfected. It may be prudent to increase the frequency of the cleaning schedule for these items, especially when illness is circulating in the setting or the local community, or if symptomatic staff and children have been touching the toys.

Plush toys should be avoided. Children's personal toys (i.e. for security or comfort) are not to be shared with other children and should be stored in a way that ensures this.

Sensory play can be used, i.e., play dough, indoor sand and sensory tables, as long as children are each provided their own materials to use and that they are not shared by more than one child. These items should be used under staff supervision.

**Food handling:** The best practice is that parents/guardians provide their own food for their child. If this is not possible, the following guidance applies:

- Staff should serve all food items.
- Utensils should be used to serve food items by staff, not fingers.
- Remove shared food containers from eating areas (e.g., snack bowls, pitchers of water or milk, salt and pepper shakers).
- If using single service packets of condiments, provide the packet directly to each child, rather than self-serving from a bulk container.
- For snack programs, dispense snacks directly to children and use prepackaged snacks only.
- Close kitchen and nourishment areas that could be accessed by children or visitors.
- Cease activities involving child participation in food preparation.

- Implement other measures as necessary or appropriate, or if directed by local public health.
- Ensure that food handling staff:
  - practice meticulous hand hygiene
  - are excluded from work if they are symptomatic

Child care centres may provide meals for children if they have a full kitchen with dedicated kitchen staff. No family-style, buffet or potluck meal service is permitted at this time.

**"No sharing" policies:** It is important to reinforce no food or water bottle sharing policies for children. Generally, these policies are intended to reduce potential exposures to allergens, but the practice of not sharing food or water bottles in child care facilities also helps reduce virus transmission between staff and children.

## Day-to-day care during COVID-19

### Reassurance

Provide reassurance to children and youth about their personal safety and health. Telling children that it is okay to be concerned is comforting. Reassure them about their safety and explain there are many things they can do to stay healthy:

- **Hand hygiene:** Perform hand hygiene often with soap and warm water for at least 15 seconds, or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, especially after coughing, blowing noses or sneezing, and when handling food.
- **Cough and sneeze etiquette:** Cough and sneeze into your arm or tissue. If using a tissue, immediately dispose of the tissue and perform hand hygiene afterwards.
- **Stay home when sick:** Children should tell staff if they are not feeling well and together make a plan to stay home from school or other activities.
- **Keep clean:** Do not touch your face, particularly your eyes, nose and mouth.
- **Stay healthy:** Stay healthy by eating healthy foods, keeping physically active, getting enough sleep and fresh air.

Print the Healthy Practices Poster Series – in particular, the hand hygiene and sneezing posters – and place them around your centre. School-aged children can be encouraged to create their own. Visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/childcare/resources/pubs/posters.pdf> to access this information.

### Communication

Children want to be heard. They do not need detailed information about events, but they do need to talk about their feelings.

Let them know they can ask questions. Answer questions honestly, but make sure that the information is suitable for their age level. If you do not know the answers to their questions, it is okay to say so and together look for resources that can answer their questions.

Remember that children are often listening when you talk to others about COVID-19. Staff should consider this and minimize discussions of COVID-19 that are not related to the child care setting.

Staff should be mindful of how children share information in less supervised settings (e.g. during outdoor play, before and after school, lunch and snack times). In these settings, children can become misinformed. It is important for staff to correct this misinformation as they become aware of it.

At this time parents are increasingly focused on the safety and wellbeing of their child(ren) while they are in the care of staff in child care settings. They expect clear communication from staff when they have questions about their child and about how the facility is implementing public health guidance.

Parents have more access to misinformation, which makes it important for staff to remind parents to use official sources for the most up-to-date and accurate information, [www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html](http://www.gov.mb.ca/health/coronavirus/index.html).

Staff can reassure parents that Manitoba's early learning and child care (ELCC) facilities and services are safe for children. Child care centres and homes consistently follow preventative practices, including environmental cleaning, frequent hand hygiene and routine screening. The ELCC program continues to work closely with public health to ensure that all ELCC operating practices and procedures are up-to-date and reflect the most current health management information that is available to the department.

More on talking to children about COVID-19 is available in the additional resources section.

### **Activities**

Maintaining familiar activities and routines will reinforce the sense of security of children. As every child care provider knows, play is a priority – it promotes physical and mental health and development and gives kids an outlet for their energy, concerns and emotions. The current situation presents many challenges for group play, but can also be a source of creativity.

Spread children out as much as possible with small groups in different rooms, or have a group outside while another is inside, as another way to encourage physical distance.

Consider the equipment and play materials. Conduct an assessment of play materials currently available and remove those that are harder to clean and sanitize. Keep a bucket or laundry basket close by for items to be deposited when they need to be cleaned.

Consider activities where children can do something to learn about and support all the people working to keep others safe and healthy:

- Talk about people in their neighbourhood or community and the role they are playing (e.g., mail carriers and grocery clerks, doctors and nurses).
- Young children could create art work to post in windows to say thank you to health care workers, paramedics, other essential workers (truck drivers, grocery store clerks), etc.
- Older children could write a thank you song or a short play, then videotape a performance to send to essential workers
- Children could connect virtually with children at another centre to perform their songs for each other or perhaps collaborate on something.

Depending on the age of the children in the centre, they will have ideas and suggestions. Discuss the concept of physical distancing, using a visual such as a string. Brainstorm with them, asking for their ideas in terms of coming up with ways they can play, and activities they think will allow an appropriate distance. Ask them about some of the typical experiences that are part of their typical day (e.g., circle time and snack), or areas in the playroom (e.g., housekeeping or block areas). Give them scenarios - "How could you play in the block area" – and use the string to try out their ideas.

**Outdoor Play:** Move activities outdoors if possible, and schedule outdoor play to maintain cohorts of children and staff. Getting outdoors for walks or to the park or nearby trails with the children is encouraged. Children may play on play structures or play equipment (e.g. tire swings, play houses) as long as physical distancing (no crowding) can be maintained and they clean their hands before/after. Children, staff and volunteers should perform hand hygiene before and after returning from outdoor play.

Sharing toys in an outside setting (e.g. sand box) is permitted, as long as effective hand hygiene can be ensured before and after the play. However, younger children with a lot of hand-to-mouth activity should not be permitted to share toys in an indoor or outdoor setting. If possible, designate space and toys within the play area for each cohort. Outdoor play areas and toys should be cleaned and disinfected between use as per regular cleaning and disinfection procedures.

When visiting public outdoor green spaces, avoid using public water fountains. Children should bring their own prefilled water bottle to these activities. Remember to have everyone clean their hands when they re-enter the centre.

Other outdoor activities where physical distancing can be maintained are also permitted (e.g., composting, gardening).

**Sports:** Indoor or outdoor non-contact sports (e.g. tennis, soccer) are permitted as long as physical distancing can be maintained during the play, except for brief exchanges of close contact. Choose outdoor settings as much as possible, as they are lower risk for transmission of COVID-19. A more detailed document has been developed to provide guidance on how sports and other activities could be modified/adapted to reduce the transmission of COVID-19. You can find this at: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/sports-guidelines.html>.

**Outings/Field Trips:** Field trips or outings are permitted, however, the participation of children must be entirely voluntary when accompanied by appropriate parental permission. Enhanced planning for outings and field trips will be necessary to ensure the health guidelines are met. Trips to spray pads and other local centres such as libraries and community centres are permitted, provided they follow the applicable guidelines, as well as requirements around social distancing and capacity. When planning outings/field trips, consider the following:

- Outdoor settings are lower risk for transmission of COVID-19.
- Avoid crowded venues where physical distancing of 6 feet (2 meters) cannot be maintained.
- Locations with high touch surfaces are higher risk for transmission of the virus (outdoor settings have lower risk for this).

- Ensure there is access to hand washing and/or alcohol-based hand sanitizer during the outing. Handwashing will be required if the activity involves getting the hands soiled.
- For group transportation, physical distancing needs to be maintained (i.e. one child per seat on a bus).
- Avoid using public water fountains. Children should bring their own prefilled water bottle to these activities.

**Activities with animals/pets:** Animals and pets are permitted as per child care regulations. Children and staff who handle animals should perform proper hand hygiene before and after handling animals. (see Hygiene Practices section above). Ensure animal handlers who are visiting the facility are screened following processes for visitors, and ensure physical distancing is possible between the animal handler visitor and the child. Medical or non-medical masks may be worn by the visitor as an additional precaution.

## **Health Concerns and how to address them**

### **What happens if a child exhibits symptoms?**

If a child develops symptoms while at the facility, the child should be isolated in a separate room. If a separate room is not available, the child needs to be kept at least two metres/six feet away from other children and staff. If possible, a medical mask should be provided to and worn by the sick child (> 2 years of age only).

The parent should be notified to come and pick up the child immediately. Ask the parent or guardian to refer to the online screening tool, contact Health Links – Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257) or the child’s health care provider for direction, if required.

If the child is young and requires close contact and care while isolated, caregivers can continue to care for the child until the parent is able to pick-up the child. Caregivers should be mindful of hand hygiene and avoid contact with the respiratory secretions of the child. A medical mask should be worn by the staff person caring for the child.

Additional environmental cleaning should occur. Focus should be in high-touch areas and areas where the child spent time. All items (e.g., bedding and toys) used by the child while isolated, should be cleaned and disinfected as soon as the child has been picked up.

A sick child can return to the centre once it has been determined that it is safe to do so by their health care provider or public health. If a child is symptomatic and tests negative, can return to the centre 24 hours after symptoms resolve. If a child with symptoms is not tested, they must isolate and be excluded from the ELCC facility for at minimum 10 days (and until symptoms resolve).

If a child that is symptomatic has a positive test, public health will be in contact to provide advice. Public health typically follows up with contacts of cases within 24 to 48 hours. If there is no notification by public health within that time frame, you can assume no contacts within the centre have been identified or the sick child has been confirmed not to have COVID-19.

### **What happens if a staff member exhibits symptoms?**

Staff should use the [screening checklist](#) before attending work, and be directed to stay home if they are feeling unwell. If a staff member or volunteer in a child care facility becomes

symptomatic, they should immediately isolate themselves from other staff and children, notify their supervisor and go home to isolate. They should complete the online screening tool <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/screening-tool/>, then contact Health Links - Info Santé (204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257) or their health care provider for direction. Additional environmental cleaning should occur. Focus should be in high-touch areas and areas where the staff/volunteer spent time.

Staff members who are away sick, or self-isolating, must follow the facility's human resource policy on being away from work.

A sick staff member can return to work once it has been determined that it is safe to do so by their health care provider or public health. If a staff member is symptomatic and tests negative, they can return to work 24 hours after the symptoms resolve. If staff are not tested, they must isolate and be excluded from work for a minimum 10 days (and until symptoms resolve). If the staff member is symptomatic and has a positive test, public health will be in contact with advice. Public health typically follows up with contacts of cases within 24 to 48 hours. If there is no notification by public health within that time frame, you can assume no contacts within the centre have been identified or the sick staff member has been confirmed not to have COVID-19.

### **Outbreak Management**

In the event that a case of COVID-19 is confirmed to be connected to a child care centre, public health will provide additional guidance including ensuring that appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response.

**NOTE:** Public Health Measures is being updated to include detailed guidance on this [https://manitoba.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/interim\\_guidance.pdf](https://manitoba.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/interim_guidance.pdf)

Public health actions and directions may include, but are not limited to:

- contact tracing, which involves identifying contacts of a positive case and contacting those individuals,
- requesting records that identify cohorts/groups of staff and children in the child care setting for a specified time frame,
- testing of staff and children that may have been exposed to a positive case,
- enhancing environmental cleaning, and
- assessing need for facility closure.

Child care facilities are expected to work with public health to ensure a prompt response to cases of COVID-19 that may have been exposed in or may have attended a child care facility. As directed by Public Health, ELCC providers will send a letter notifying parents/guardians when there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 at their facility.

## **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

Staff/home providers should maintain current practices for the use of PPE with respect to the hazards normally encountered in their work, with the exception of wearing a medical mask (surgical/procedural mask) when unable to consistently and reliably maintain 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from children and other staff. There is no role for the use of N95 respirators in this setting. Glove use is only required as per your regular practices and current policies.

To don (put on) the mask safely, perform hand hygiene by handwashing with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Place the mask on your face carefully so it covers your mouth and nose, handling it with the strings/elastic ear loops as much as possible, and mold the nose bridge to ensure it does not move while on. Avoid touching the mask once you have put it on. If you need to adjust it, clean your hands before and after adjusting the mask. Never pull the mask down below your nose or mouth and chin. Never dangle the mask from one ear or both ears.

To remove the mask safely, remove the mask from behind using the strings/elastic ear loops; do not touch the front of the mask. Discard the mask immediately, ideally in a no touch receptacle. Perform hand hygiene by handwashing with soap and water or the use of alcohol based hand sanitizer. Visit <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/prepareandprevent/index.html> for the latest guidance from on use and care of masks.

Also, visit the following Public Health Agency of Canada page to access a poster and guidelines for how to safely use a non-medical mask or face covering:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/public-health/services/publications/diseases-conditions/covid-19-safely-use-non-medical-mask-face-covering.html>.

Staff/home providers may also use eye protection, when unable to consistently and reliably maintain 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from children and other staff, to further mitigate the risk of being a close contact to confirmed case in the child care facility.

Public health recommends the use of frames with lenses as the preferred form of eye protection, as they are easier to reuse, clean and disinfect.

The recommended Shared Health procedure for cleaning and disinfection of frames with lenses can be found here: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/standard-operating-procedure-disinfecting-eye.pdf>.

### **Disinfection of Eye Protection**

- All forms of eye protection must be disinfected using disinfecting wipes as per the Shared Health guidance protocols.
- The container(s) of disinfecting wipes being used to disinfect eye protection should be used exclusively for disinfecting the frames and lenses, and should not be used to clean other surfaces.
- It is recommended that the disinfecting wipes be stored in a central location within the child care facility that is used by staff/home providers for the safe donning and doffing

of PPE for breaks and ends of shifts to minimize the risk of the wipes being used for other purposes.

### **Medical-grade masks**

Effective May 2021, all licensed child care centres, nursery schools and family/group child care homes are advised that the continuous use of medical-grade masks by staff/home providers is required when unable to consistently and reliably maintain 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from children and other staff. This requirement will remain in place until a directive from public health is received that this is no longer required.

If a child develops symptoms while at the child care facility, a medical mask should be provided to and worn by the sick child (> 2 years of age only).

### **Non-medical masks**

Effective September 8, 2020, all child care facilities were advised of the following requirements for wearing non-medical masks:

- All school-age children in grade 4 (aged 8/9) and higher are required to wear non-medical masks while attending their child care facility, when physical distancing of two metres is not possible.
- Children in grade 3 or under are not required to wear a non-medical mask while attending their child care facility. Parents/guardians may choose to have their younger child(ren) wear a mask, provided the child can wear it properly as per provincial guidance (please see below for more information).
- Effective May 2021, the public health directive requires the continuous use of medical-grade masks by staff when unable to consistently and reliably maintain 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from children and other staff.
- The following are considered exceptions to mandated mask wearing:
  - children under the age of two years
  - children under the age of 5 years either chronologically or developmentally who refuse to wear a face covering and cannot be persuaded to do so by their caregiver
  - people, especially children, with severe sensory processing disorders
  - patients with facial deformities that are incompatible with masking
  - patients with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) who are triggered by a face covering
  - extreme agoraphobia/asphyxia phobia (which is longstanding and pre-dating COVID-19)
  - people with a cognitive impairment, intellectual deficiency or autism spectrum disorder for who wearing a face covering will cause severe distress or disorganization
  - a medical condition unrelated to COVID-19, including breathing or cognitive difficulties or a disability, which prevent them from safely wearing a mask
  - people who are unable to apply or remove a covering without help
- A medical note from a health care provider is not required by Public Health or ELCC to accommodate limitations to wearing a mask at their child care facility or during bus transportation.

- If there are limitations to a child's ability to wear a mask during bus transportation or while attending child care, the parent/ guardian/caregiver must provide written notification to the child's ELCC provider, specifying the child's specific limitation with wearing a mask from the list of exceptions above.
- If a parent/guardian/caregiver is concerned about their child's ability to safely wear a mask on a bus or while attending child care, they should speak with their child's health care provider. Public health advises that inappropriate exceptions to mandated mask wearing have the potential to inadvertently compromise the overall public health measures implemented in child care facilities to mitigate risk to all and to minimize the spread of COVID-19 in Manitoba schools and communities.
- In terms of wearing masks during transportation to/from ELCC facility and school or another location:
  - If you are assisting a school-age child with transportation between school and the child care facility please note that all children are required to wear masks on school buses.
  - If your facility is providing transportation, all children should be masked prior to entering the vehicle and during the trip.
- It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to provide masks daily for each child in grade 4 (age 8/9 and higher) attending a child care facility (at least 2 masks per day).
- Children may remove their masks to take breaks outside while playing.
- Masks can also be removed while indoors at an ELCC facility provided that physical distancing can be maintained, and while eating or drinking.
- In a case where a child is having active breathing difficulties the child will be advised to remove their mask and the parent/guardian/caregiver will be contacted to pick up the child to seek medical attention.

Masks should have two or more layers of tightly woven fabric, completely cover the nose and mouth, and fit snugly against the sides of the face without gaps. Neck gaiters, buffs and neck fleeces are not recommended in place of a mask, as they are not designed as a non-medical mask and their effectiveness is unknown at the time. A mask can be either a non-medical re-useable cloth mask or a disposable mask.

Parents and guardians are asked to refer to the Department of Families COVID-19 Notices and Circulars for updates about mask use and guidelines. Also, please encourage parents/guardians to review mask guidance prepared by Manitoba Education. These resources include important information about proper mask use including information about who should not wear a mask, as well as proper care, storage and handling of non-medical, reusable masks as well as disposable masks.

- Department of Families COVID-19 Notices and Circulars for Early Learning and Child Care Centres and Home-Based Child Care Providers: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/covid-circulars.html>

- See Mask Guidance for K-12:  
[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/mask\\_guidance.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/mask_guidance.pdf)
- New video – Helping parents and children put on and take off masks properly  
<https://youtu.be/eGhLwmFRyZY>
- Manitoba Shared Health, COVID-19 Guidance on Medical Exemptions  
<https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-medical-exemptions-school-and-masks.pdf>
- Parent/Guardian and Educator Frequently Asked Questions and Answers:  
[https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/qa\\_welcome\\_back\\_combined.pdf](https://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/docs/qa_welcome_back_combined.pdf)

### **Mask and Eye Protection Supply**

Beginning in May 2021, the Government of Manitoba is providing ELCC facilities with medical-grade masks and frames with disposable lenses for eye protection. Facilities will be provided with four (4) masks a day per staff/home provider and 1.25 lenses a day per staff/home provider while the public health directive requiring the continuous use of medical masks by centre staff and home child care providers is in effect.

Beginning in September 2020, the Government of Manitoba has been providing ELCC facilities with a supply of reusable masks for staff/child care providers (2 reusable masks per employee) and for children (grades four and up) who attend a child care facility without their own mask. This is to ensure that no child (grade four and up) is turned away from child care due to attending without a mask.

These reusable masks should be washed in the hot cycle of the washing machine, dried thoroughly, and stored in a clean bag/container. Masks should be washed between use. Once a mask has been given to an individual, it should be worn only by that individual.

**NOTE:** The masks being provided for children are to be distributed only in the event that a child attends a facility without their own mask. The child care facility should remind parents/guardians that they have a responsibility to ensure that they provide masks for their child for the purpose of attending child care.

### **Documentation**

Please use the form in **Appendix A** to notify the Early Learning and Child Care Program of any positive COVID – 19 cases in your facility. Please report once your facility has been contacted by public health regarding a confirmed case in your facility:

- Confirmed cases of COVID-19 involving staff, children in your care or family members of staff/children in your care, and for home-based providers, other residents of the household.
- Confirmed cases have received a positive lab result from a provincial laboratory.

It is important that child care services continue to be delivered safely for staff and children. This can be done by ensuring staff and children consistently follow hygiene practices and other recommendations made by public health officials.

**Please note: If your facility closes prior to receiving direction to do so from public health, notify your Child Care Coordinator by phone or email as quickly as possible.**

When there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case at your facility, please email the completed form to [cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca) with the subject line: **COVID-19 Incident Reporting: Facility Name and Facility Number.**

### **Additional Resources**

The following resources may support you in talking to children about COVID-19, as appropriate. These resources should not be viewed as, or used in the place of, public health advice.

Resources on Talking to Children about COVID-19

Child Trends

[https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic?utm\\_source=mailchimp&utm\\_campaign=030096d2e1f0&utm\\_medium=page](https://www.childtrends.org/publications/resources-for-supporting-childrens-emotional-well-being-during-the-covid-19-pandemic?utm_source=mailchimp&utm_campaign=030096d2e1f0&utm_medium=page)

UNICEF

<https://www.unicef.org/coronavirus/how-teachers-can-talk-children-about-coronavirus-disease-covid-19>

Save the Children

[https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/coronavirus-outbreak/coronavirus-outbreak-how-to-explain-children?utm\\_source=mailchimp&utm\\_campaign=030096d2e1f0&utm\\_medium=page](https://www.savethechildren.org/us/what-we-do/emergency-response/coronavirus-outbreak/coronavirus-outbreak-how-to-explain-children?utm_source=mailchimp&utm_campaign=030096d2e1f0&utm_medium=page)



## Appendix A – COVID-19 Incident Reporting Form

### COVID-19 Incident Reporting Form

**Please use this form to notify the Early Learning and Child Care Program only after public health officials have been in contact with your facility regarding a confirmed positive COVID-19 case.** The case may involve staff, children in your care, or family members of staff/children in your care, and for home-based providers, other residents of the household.

A facility may learn that a staff member, child or parent/guardian has had a positive COVID-19 test prior to being notified by public health. If your facility is notified of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case by an individual, facility management can contact Health Links-Info Santé (204-788-8200 in Winnipeg or 1-888-315-9257 toll-free elsewhere in the province) to request direction.

Please note: your facility may not be contacted by public health if during the contact tracing investigation it is determined that the positive case was not present in the facility during the communicable period for COVID-19 (see circular 2021-19 for definition).

Date Submitted: _____	Child Care Coordinator: _____
Regional Health Authority:	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Interlake-Eastern Regional Health	<input type="checkbox"/> Southern Health-Santé Sud
<input type="checkbox"/> Northern Health Region	<input type="checkbox"/> Winnipeg Regional Health Authority
<input type="checkbox"/> Prairie Mountain Health	

#### a) Facility Information

- a) Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- b) Facility ID Number: \_\_\_\_\_
- c) Contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_
- d) Contact Information: \_\_\_\_\_

#### b) COVID-19 Information

- a) Positive COVID-19 test confirmed for:
- Child enrolled in facility
  - Staff member
  - Family/group child care home provider
  - Household member in family/group child care home
  - Parent/guardian who drops off/picks up child at facility

If more than one positive case, please describe (e.g., 2 children, 4 staff, etc.):

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b) Facility was informed about the positive COVID-19 test by:

Individual or child's parent/guardian Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Public health contact tracer Date: \_\_\_\_\_

c) Please provide information about the public health directives and total number of cohorts, children and/or staff affected by the public health directive.

Staff and children's parents/guardians advised to self-monitor for symptoms.

Close contact(s) identified and directed to self-isolate:

\_\_\_\_\_ children affected

\_\_\_\_\_ staff/child care home provider(s) affected

\_\_\_\_\_ household member(s) in child care home affected

Cohort(s) identified as close contacts and directed to self-isolate:

\_\_\_\_\_ cohort(s) affected

\_\_\_\_\_ children affected

\_\_\_\_\_ staff affected

Closure of facility:

\_\_\_\_\_ children affected

\_\_\_\_\_ staff/child care home provider(s) affected

d) When applicable, provide the date that the children/staff who were identified as close contacts can return to the facility or the facility can reopen as directed by public health:

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e) Please provide information about what the facility is doing to ensure that services continue to be delivered in a healthy way for children and staff:

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f) When applicable, describe actions taken by facility management (board of directors or owner/operator) prior to receiving direction from public health:

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- g) Please provide any important information about the situation you want to provide that is not included above:

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**Instructions**

- 1) Send this completed form to [cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca](mailto:cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca).
- 2) Attach copies of public health letters sent to staff and/or parents/guardians when applicable.
- 3) After submission of this report, please provide follow-up information by email to your Child Care Coordinator. This may include information such as additional positive COVID-19 cases confirmed in your facility as well as the numbers of additional children and/or staff affected by further directives from public health (when applicable).

**Alternate formats available upon request.**