

# Durham Region's Early Learning and Child Care Virtual Town Hall (July 9, 2020)

## Q&A Summary Document

This document provides a summary of the information conveyed during the town hall as well as responses to questions asked through the Q&A chat that were not covered. **Note:** Some responses have been updated to address changes to the province's [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#).

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### About COVID-19

#### Do children get COVID-19? Why are they considered low risk?

People of all ages can be infected by the virus. Children are less often reported as cases when compared with adults and the illness they experience is usually mild. While children may be less affected, they may also have a greater number of contacts within child care, school and community settings.

#### What are the signs and symptoms that we should look out for in children?

Typical symptoms of COVID -19 include:

- Fever (temperature of 37.8°C or 100°F or greater)
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath
- Sore throat
- Difficulty swallowing
- Change to sense of taste or smell
- Nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, abdominal pain
- Runny nose or nasal congestion (not caused by seasonal allergies)

If you require this information in an accessible format, please contact us at 1-800-387-0642.

Atypical symptoms must also be considered, particularly in children. Atypical symptoms include:

- Unexplained fatigue
- Delirium
- Unexplained or increased number of falls
- Chills
- Headaches
- Croup
- Conjunctivitis
- Multisystem inflammatory vasculitis in children. (Symptoms include persistent fever, abdominal pain, conjunctivitis, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea and rash).

### **Why can't we sing loud in centres?**

COVID-19 can be spread through bodily fluids. With singing, we are more likely expelling increased amounts of saliva and nasal secretions. If a person is infected with COVID-19, those secretions will shed more of the virus, increasing the chance of transmission to other children or staff.

### **Are child care workers tested for COVID-19?**

Currently there are no requirements for surveillance testing. All child care workers who provided emergency child care were asked to be tested as part of a surveillance exercise.

## Screening

All individuals including children attending child care, staff and child care providers, parents/guardians, and visitors must be screened each day before entering the child care setting. Records of all outcomes must be kept.

Ensure screening posters are visible on exterior door and that screening is aligned with Provincial direction.

### Advanced screening

**Update to guidelines (July 22/20):** Where possible, daily screening should be done electronically (e.g. via online form, survey, or e-mail) prior to arrival at the child care setting. Where operationally feasible, include temperature check as part of screening.

### In-person screening

- ✓ Place screening table at foyer entrance, visually blocking entrance into the centres. Only one screening station is required.
- ✓ Ask that both parent/caregiver and child(ren) use hand sanitizer. Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol must be placed by screening stations while taking care to ensure it is not accessible to young children. Note: Durham Region's Public Health Department recommends that hand sanitizer contain at least 70% alcohol.

- ✓ Maintain a distance of at least two metres (6 feet) from those being screened or use physical barriers (such as a plexiglass barrier). Surgical gloves and mask are to be worn.
- ✓ If physical distancing cannot be maintained, wear appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE). Guidelines for appropriate PPE should be provided by your organization.
- ✓ If advanced screening was not completed, ask screening questions and conduct temperature check. Operators may want to consider having families take their own temperature. Ensure thermometer is disinfected in between each family's use.
- ✓ Complete visual check of parent/caregiver and child for any obvious signs of illness.

## Screening Results

If parents/caregiver and children pass the screening by answering NO to all questions, and do not have a fever or obvious signs of illness, staff can take the child(ren) into the facility.

If an individual answers yes to any of the screening tests, appears visibly ill or records a temperature of 37.8°C or 100°F or above, the child(ren) must be refused entry into the facility. The person should be referred to the COVID-19 self-assessment tool on the Ministry of Health website or the Durham Public Health website to determine if further care is required.

Is there a pamphlet we can provide to parents with information on what to do and who to contact if we must refuse care due to symptoms?

Durham Public Health is currently working on creating a document for this. Information will be provided once it is available.

If your assessment station is on the first floor but the centre is located on the second floor, can parents escort children on the elevator to the staff member waiting on the second floor?

No. Parents are not permitted past the screening station.

Since the child has used hand sanitizer at the entrance, are they required to wash their hands as well before they enter the room?

No, this is not required and would exceed screening requirements.

## Isolating a child with symptoms

The following steps should be taken if a child begins to exhibit symptoms while in care:

- ✓ Supervise the child in a designated room with a hand-washing sink or hand sanitizer available.
- ✓ Notify parent/caregiver of the sick child for pick up.
- ✓ Place surgical mask on child, if tolerated.
- ✓ Maintain physical distancing with child whenever possible. Staff should wear mask and gloves and take extra care with hand hygiene.
- ✓ Increase ventilation in room, if possible (e.g. open window).
- ✓ Provide parent with information regarding isolation periods as required.
- ✓ Clean and disinfect the area immediately after the child has been sent home.

- ✓ Contact the Health Department for direction on testing and self-isolation for child, staff and children who were in the same room with ill child. Inquiries about sick children or staff can be sent to [EHL@durham.ca](mailto:EHL@durham.ca) or call the Helpline @905-668-2020.

If a child is sent home sick, are the parents of the children in the same cohort advised?

No. If it is determined that a sick child has more than one symptom and must be tested for COVID-19, a serious occurrence must be completed. A notice would then be placed on the door of the centre advising that a child did not pass the COVID-19 screening and is seeking the advice of medical practitioners.

What happens if a child and parent/caregiver pass the screening test, but the parent or child appears visibly ill? Are we allowed to refuse care based on observations?

Yes, you may refuse care. In addition, if a child is sick, any siblings that attend care must also be refused until the child has been cleared.

If a child has been sent home, do we need a doctor's note for them to come back to care?

No. If COVID-19 testing occurred, they may return once they receive a negative result. If testing did not occur, the child must be symptom-free for 48 hours to return to care.

## Support Services

### Quality Assurance Advisors (QAs) and Training Specialists

QAs and the Training Specialist team have been working hard to connect with child care sites as they begin reopening. We encourage child care supervisors and staff to reach out to them for any questions, concerns or support.

There will be no inspections during the reopening phase. The Health and Safety policies and processes required during reopening will guide programs to reopen safely. We encourage educators and operators to continue following pedagogical and Assessment for Quality Improvement (AQI) criteria within the enhanced health and safety protocols.

### Special Needs Resourcing (SNR)

All SNR resources are available including your Early Learning and Inclusion consultant or ELI, Grandview's Preschool Outreach Program, the Blind-low vision program, and Behaviour management. The referral for service remains the same for all SNR resources, however virtual and phone consultation is used whenever possible.

## Funding

### Is Wage Enhancement(WE) being paid during reopening?

During the pandemic closures, operators continued to receive WE payments. As there was no entitlement to this funding during closure, these payments will be reconciled against future WE payments. Once payments are fully reconciled, WE payments will be fully reinstated. Operators are expected to use those closure allocations to pay the portion of the WE that is not recovered through the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS).

For the reopening period, WE funding can be provided to staff for the hours worked where normally staff are in an eligible position supporting ratio and had qualified for WE pre COVID-19, but as a result of the new requirements, are temporarily taking on new roles to support the health and safety requirements set out by local health guidelines and policies during COVID-19. This includes cleaning, screening and other duties outside of the classroom.

### Will the wage subsidy be extended?

The Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) is a federal program, therefore we are unable to advise on extensions for this funding.

### Is there assistance for PPE?

Yes. An application for start-up PPE was sent to all organizations. During reopening, organizations with a Purchase of Service (POS) with Durham Region will receive financial support.

### The labour costs with current ratios are high. How can a centre without a Purchase of Service get financial support?

Child care organizations are encouraged to apply to the Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) program for support with staffing costs during reopening.

### What about fee increases?

As per the Ministry of Education, in an effort to stabilize parent fees when reopening, child care operators should set fees at the level they were at prior to the closure. For more information please refer to the Ministry's [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) document.

## Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Staff should follow their organizations policies and procedure for use of PPE within the centre.

### Are children and staff required to wear a mask?

Children are not required to wear a mask. Staff should follow their organization's policies and procedures.

### Will staff need to wear full PPE to apply sunscreen and change diapers?

Staff should follow their organization's policies and procedures.

## Cohorts

**Note:** Effective July 27, the Ministry of Education updated their guidelines around reopening and cohorts. The responses in this document have been updated to reflect this change.

### What is a cohort?

The Ministry of Education has defined a cohort as a group of children and the staff members assigned to them, who stay together throughout the duration of the program for minimum seven days.

**Update to guidelines (July 22)** As of July 27, the maximum cohort size for each room in a child care centre will consist of no more than 15 children, space permitting. Children in the cohort must remain the same. Staff are not included in this number but should be considered part of the cohort that stays together. Cohorts must stay together and are not permitted to mix with other cohorts.

All Cohorts must still meet the Child Care and Early Years Act (CCEYA) requirements.

[Do we have to place children of the same family in the same room?](#)

This is a best practice but may not be possible based on group sizes and ratios.

[Can two children share a full-time spot?](#)

No. Each individual child must be counted as a number in the cohort, even if they are not attending daily or full days.

[Are special needs resourcing staff counted in the cohort?](#)

No. Any special needs resourcing staff (e.g. ELI, behaviour management consultant) are not counted in the cohort. They follow their own process for wearing PPE.

[What happens if a staff member is sick or on vacation?](#)

Staff members must be replaced to meet the required ratios. Replacement staff should be kept with the same cohort, wherever possible. In situations where staff is needed in another cohort within a seven-day period, PPE is required.

[Can the person doing screening then join a cohort?](#)

Yes, as the required physical distancing and PPE guidelines would be followed during screening.

[How long must we hold spots?](#)

According to the Ministry of Education, no family must lose their spot. Capacity issues may have caused issues with this as space may not have been available for all families wanting to return their children to care. Increased cohort sizes should help with this issue.

[What does the waitlist process look like?](#)

Each operator must create a waitlist policy. The Ministry of Education has provided some guidance on what to consider when developing your waitlist policy. Priority should be considered for:

- children who attended emergency child care and are returning to their original child care provider.
- families where a parent/caregiver must return to work outside of the home.
- families with special circumstances that would benefit from children returning to care. (E.g. Children with special needs).

## Cleaning and sanitary practices

Enhanced cleaning and sanitary practices must be followed according to the Provincial Guidelines.

[Can children use playdough for a full day?](#)

If playdough is being used, children should have access to their own labelled container. It can then be accessed by the child throughout the day and then discarded or sent home with the child at the end of the day.

[If the centre is in a school, can only one child be allowed into the washroom at a time?](#)

Washrooms must be disinfected after each use. Stalls provide barriers in between children; therefore, children would be allowed to use the washroom according to the number of stalls available.

### Is each child required to have their own crayons?

Children are not required to have their own set of writing utensils; however, consideration must be taken for disinfection. Markers can be sanitized in between each use. Communal crayons can be rotated every 72 hours, similar to books.

### If we do not have cubbies, can children simply put their bags on the floor in the hallway?

Yes. Consideration should be made to space items on the floor to ensure a safe distance. Additionally, a bin or bag should be used to separate personal items from sitting directly on the floor.

### Can we use yoga mats for floor mats?

Yes, however disinfecting procedures must be followed in between each use unless each mat is assigned to individual children.

### Can we use area rugs in our rooms?

Low pile carpets and rugs can be used but must be vacuumed daily. If in a school, individual school board expectations must also be followed. For example, the Durham District School Board requires that a HEPA filter vacuum be used.

### How many times should we clean and disinfect the toys?

All toys must be cleaned and disinfected daily, when in use. Mouthed items must be cleaned and disinfected as used.

### What about medications?

Policies that were in place prior to the COVID-19 pandemic remain in effect.

## Programming

Daily programming is expected to continue as required in the CCEYA. Although inspections are not currently being conducted, Durham Region Operating Criteria (DROC) are still expected to be in place.

### How can you adapt programming for physical distancing?

Physical distancing between children in a child care setting can be difficult, but it is encouraged that a welcoming and caring environment be maintained. The following are some tips to achieve this:

- ✓ Remove extra furniture to increase space between seating and playing areas.
- ✓ Apply concepts of invitations to play as visual cues for children to self-select single-activity learning stations and encourage individual play.
- ✓ Create visual cues on the floor during group activities, however taping off areas for each child to stay within is not required.
- ✓ Separate groups when possible to alternate lunch and outdoor times.
- ✓ Avoid getting close to faces of children where possible; if not possible, follow PPE protocols.
- ✓ Ensure a schedule is in place to avoid two or more cohorts mix in common areas.
- ✓ Encourage children to greet each other using non-physical gestures (e.g. wave, nod, or verbal 'hello').

- ✓ Be mindful of using developmentally appropriate language to encourage children to respect the space between themselves and peers.
- ✓ Use appropriate positive redirection practices for children if they are engaging in activities that should be avoided, such as singing.

### How do you imbed or maintain How Does Learning Happen?

Well-being, Engagement, Expression and Belonging are easily maintained throughout reopening:

Well-being – Ensuring each child’s physical well-being daily along with mental health check-ins.

Engagement – Children are engaged in provocations that interest them. Smaller cohorts facilitate this easily.

Expression – Children express themselves with a variety of materials and communicate how they are feeling.

Belonging – Through helping children and families return to the program, develop relationships with new families and/or educators in the program.

Promote – Refer to Durham Region’s [Operating a Child Care Centre](#) and the [Child Care reopening toolkit](#) for guidance and best practices.

### How can sensory play still be incorporated? What activities are permitted?

Individual sensory play is permitted and can be incorporated into daily programming while following physical distancing guidelines. This includes activities such as playdough and outdoor sandboxes. Individual cooking activities are permitted with older children. Exceptional handwashing before, throughout and after the activity must be completed.

Summer outdoor waterplay may happen with safe practices. Ensure no standing water is used. Sprinklers and hoses should allow for the water to make contact and disperse with only one child at a time. Water tables must not be used.

### How can you keep distance between children while leaving their classroom to go play outside?

Gentle reminders to children are encouraged to remind them to keep space between the transition.

## Additional considerations

### How can we support children and families that are coming into care?

Provide parents with policies in advance to highlight changes in the routine. This can assist with daily drop off and pick-up as well as allow parents to prepare children for what to expect when they return. Continue to build connections between homes and centres by regularly communicating with families using virtual tools (e.g. newsletters, email, electronic documentation applications and phone calls).

### What happens if there is a second wave?

The health and safety of all children, families and staff remain the priority for Durham Region’s Children’s Services Division. We will continue to operate following the guidelines of Durham Region’s Public Health Department as well as Provincial Guidelines.

The following references provide the most current information and updates on COVID-19, funding, reopening and more:

- [Durham.ca](#)
- Early learning updates. The [most recent edition](#) includes funding information.
- The Ministry of Education's [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#)