



Durham Region's Early Learning and Child Care Virtual Town Hall (August 25, 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.

For additional questions or concerns, please refer to the Ministry of Education's [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) document or contact the [Children's Services Division](#), your [Training Specialist](#) or [Quality Assurance Advisor](#).

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Programming

Daily programming is expected to continue as required in the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 (CCEYA). Although Quality Assurance inspections are not currently being conducted, the Durham Region Operating Criteria (DROC) are still expected to be in place. Children can still attend excellent programs in exceptional learning environments that align with *How Does Learning Happen?* Adapted programming can include many of the quality indicators that are set out in the DROC as well as new innovative ways that ensure the intent behind the indicators are met. Enhanced cleaning and physical distancing practices can be incorporated into our understanding of how children play and learn.

How can programs meet the two-hour outdoor play time required in the CCEYA while keeping groups separate as required in the Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak document?

As per the CCEYA and Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak document, operators should schedule outdoor play by groups in order to facilitate physical distancing. Where the outdoor play area is large enough to accommodate multiple groups/cohorts, operators must separate the groups by at least two metres. Physical

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

barriers and visual cues, such as pylons or the safe construction of a temporary fence may help keep small groups of children in designated play areas.

Operators are encouraged to have designated toys and equipment (e.g. balls, loose equipment) for each group playing outdoors. Where toys are shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected in-between each use. When returning from outside, all children and educators should practice exceptional hand hygiene.

Educators are encouraged to research and learn about programming that occurs predominately outdoors. There are programs locally and around the world that establish outdoor play spaces and use them for long periods of the day. As we move into fall and winter, it is encouraged to have discussions with families about the benefits of outdoor programming and to continue to find exciting ways to use outdoor spaces.

Symptoms of COVID-19

What are the symptoms of COVID-19 in children?

Like adults, children can exhibit the typical symptoms of COVID-19 which includes:

- 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)

Atypical symptoms tend to appear in children more frequently. These atypical symptoms include:

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

Masking and Face Shields

Why has there been a change in masking and face shield requirements for September 1?

The Ministry of Education has mandated that all staff and approved visitors (e.g., Special Needs Resourcing professionals) in licensed child care centres, as well as licensed home child care agencies, must wear a medical mask and face shield as of September 1, 2020. This decision comes as new research becomes available about how to actively contain the spread of the virus. As we prepare for a second wave of COVID-19, child care centres must continue to apply layers of protection against the spread. Masks and face shields are an additional layer in a comprehensive infection control plan. This plan also includes active screening, daily health checks, enhanced cleaning and disinfecting, physical distancing, and exceptional hand hygiene.

Research shows that it takes approximately four weeks to get used to wearing a mask. By doing this now while cases are low, we help to reduce the spread of transmission during the second wave.

Are licensed home child care providers included in the new masking and face shield requirements? Why?

Yes, the requirements for masks and face shields also apply to licensed home child care providers. Suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ontario have had a linkage to home child care. For the same reasons as with child care centres, we must protect all our children, families and providers.

What kind of masks are acceptable in child care? What is the difference between medical and non-medical masks?

All child care staff must wear medical masks. This type of mask is a higher grade compared to cloth and are typically yellow or blue. If purchased independently, ensure the box says 'medical' on it. If you are unsure, refer to the product website for clarification.

Staff must also wear face shields or goggles. These are to protect from respiratory droplets and do not replace the requirement to wear a mask.

Children can still wear non-medical masks or cloth masks. Non-medical masks are considered a source control; they help to protect germs from being spread, but do not protect from someone else's germs.

Are eyeglasses or safety glasses an acceptable replacement for face shields or safety goggles?

No.

How do you properly wear a mask?

When wearing a mask:

- The mask should be flush to the face and cover nose, mouth and chin without any gaping.
- Wash hands before and after putting on and taking off the mask.
- Remove mask by the ear loops.

A number of resources are available on the [Durham website](#) for the proper use of masks and face shields. A step-by-step video demonstration of how to properly put on mask and eye protection is also available on the [Public Health Ontario website](#).

How often should a mask be changed and disposed of?

One mask per day is acceptable as long as it is not wet or dirty. When the mask is not in use, place it down on a clean napkin or container. Be sure to wash your hands before and after taking off your mask.

How do you disinfect a face shield?

Face shields and safety goggles should be cleaned at the end of each shift. Proper disinfection or cleaning may vary based on the type being used. Instructions on proper usage and cleaning should come with the product. The disinfectant used must have a Drug Identification Number (DIN) which can be found directly on the product. More information on [disinfectants for use against COVID-19](#) can be found on the Government of Canada's website.

What documentation is required if a child or staff member cannot wear a mask?

The Ministry of Education's Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak document encourages that each centre have an exemption policy for masking. A doctor's note or affidavit is not required by Durham Public Health or the Ministry of Education.

What Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) is being provided to centres by the Ministry of Education?

The Ministry of Education is providing all licensed child care centres with both masks and face shields for staff. In addition, a supply of masks will be provided for before and after school children for situations where children do not have their own.

What happens if PPE is not received by September 1, the mandated date all staff must wear masks and face shields?

There are no barriers to reopening if PPE has not been received on time, nor would a centre receive any fines or reprimands because of this. As outlined in the [masking memo](#), operators should advise the Ministry of Education at least two weeks in advance of reopening or need to ensure deliveries are received well ahead of time.

Who is to supply PPE for visitors or enhanced staff?

PPE can be provided by operators. PPE provided by the Ministry of Education for operators is based on existing capacity numbers with assumptions that there will be enhanced staffing in place. If supply numbers are below what an operator feels is needed, they can advise the Ministry of Education accordingly so shipments can be adjusted as needed. The link to advise the Ministry can be found in the [masking memo](#).

Are educators required to wear masks while outdoors?

The use of masks is not required outdoors for adults or children if physical distancing of a least two metres can be maintained between individuals.

Screening

Should temperatures still be taken even though we are moving towards online screening?

Where possible, daily screening should be done electronically (e.g. via online form, survey or email) prior to arrival at the child care setting. It is encouraged to have parents take temperatures at home and attest that it has been done to avoid a gather of people waiting to be screened.

As per the Operating Guidelines During COVID-19 Outbreak document, temperature taking can be included in in-person screening, where operationally feasible. Durham Public Health has advised that temperature taking at the child care centre, however, is not mandatory.

What happens if a child has a symptom of COVID-19, but the parent or educator knows it is not COVID-19 related? For example, a runny nose related to seasonal allergies.

In these situations, a note from a medical provider is recommended outlining the symptom and indicating that is the child's baseline and not a change from normal.

Should staff continue to work if they come into close contact with a suspected COVID-19 case?

No. Someone who has been in close contact with a suspected or confirmed case would be considered a high-risk contact (e.g. spouse, roommate, etc.). Public Health would likely be in direct contact in these situations and advise when someone is required to self-isolate and therefore be unable to attend work.

How do before and after school programs keep required daily documentation for screening if the school conducts the screening?

Operators are encouraged to work with school principals to determine what their approach at their respective school will be. Collaboration is encouraged to avoid

unnecessary screening. Where alignment cannot be achieved, screening must be completed by the centre.

Direction from the Ministry is in accordance with O. Reg. 137/15 under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA), which states that every licensee must ensure that, before any person proceeds beyond the entranceway of a child care centre or home child care premises, including a before and after school program, the person is screened for symptoms of the coronavirus (COVID-19). In addition, records of the screening need to be kept for at least 12 months from the date the record is made and kept on the premises of the child care centre.

Additionally, Ministry advice indicates that where a before and/or after school program is located in a school, licensees and school boards should work together to establish, coordinate and implement health and safety policies and protocols, including how information will be shared and communicated about children being screened prior to participating in before/after school and core day programs, to support licensee compliance with record-keeping requirements under the CCEYA.

What happens if there is a case or outbreak in a shared space?

There is not a blanket statement as to what will occur. Public Health will provide both child care and school outbreak guidance. As a case is identified, Public Health investigates further and will address exactly what needs to be done as well as advise and provide support through the process. Child care has done an amazing job. There have been no confirmed COVID-19 cases in Durham Region to date.

Staffing and Groups

Can staff work in more than one room at the same location?

As per the Operational Guidelines, this should be avoided whenever possible. Staffing concerns are recognized. In situations where this cannot be avoided, it must be fully documented for contact tracing purposes. It is also imperative that all and safety precautions are practiced. Gowning and gloves would not be required.

Can staff work in more than one location?

No. Staff can only work in one location at this time.

What if a staff member has a part-time job elsewhere? Is this allowed?

Unless there is legislation such as in Long-Term Care settings, there are no limitations set for child care staff related to other employment. All staff are expected to ensure they comply with Regulations, Legislation and Health Orders related to the pandemic.

Can a teacher of a cohort act as a runner for part of the day?

There is an understanding that the runner roles are critical to ensure parents and caregivers who are picking up and dropping off children remain outside child care and also support the needs of child care educator teams and enhanced health protocols. To reduce the spread and transmission of COVID-19, PPE requirements and health and safety protocols including hand hygiene must be followed if this cannot be avoided.

Can children be grouped together in one room as they arrive until the full complement of staff arrives for the day? And then again at the end of the day for reduced ratios?

No. Children must be kept within their respective groups.

Some community-based centres receive children from many different schools which will result in a mixing of groups from school to before and after programs. Is this allowed?

Yes, this is allowed. It is recognized that it is not operationally feasible to keep these children apart and it is important to ensure that families have the support for their before and after care needs. The importance of masking requirements and additional health and safety requirements are particularly demonstrated for these situations.

Funding

Will funding still be available for vacancies after September 1?

The Ministry of Education has provided some flexibility in funding to support the Safe Reopening from September 1 - December 31. The Children's Service Division is working through closure fixed costs reconciliations. Funding for the July and August reopening phase as well as a funding framework to allocate the recently announced Federal/Provincial Safe Restart Funding will also be developed and implemented.

Data collection related to reconciliation and funding distribution will occur. The Children's Services Division is committed to keeping the administrative burden related to data collection as streamlined as possible. Funding administered by Children's Services will be for Purchase of Service sites. Non-purchase of Service sites should contact the Ministry of Education directly.

Additional Considerations

We have an infant sleep room that does not allow us to meet physical distancing requirements with cribs. What is the suggestion or expectation? Will fines be laid out in these situations?

No, there would be no fines in these situations. It is recognized that the physical distancing requirements cannot always be maintained, such as with sleeping. This is why cohorting and children staying in their groups is so critically important.

Are new families allowed in the centres for tours?

No. Parents are not permitted into the child care centres. For new families, virtual tours are encouraged. Taking advantage of outdoors spaces can also assist with the integration of children into child care.

In an infant/toddler room it is going to be tough for babies not to see facial expressions all day long. In addition, for children with speech and language issues, how would staff efficiently work with these children when they are asking children to look at their mouth for pronunciation?

The Ministry of Education is continuing to source masks including masks that would accommodate this type of work, such as masks that are clear around the mouth. Operational Guidance also allows for mask breaks where physical distancing can be maintained. These breaks can be used to support this development.

Resources

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

- [Durham.ca](https://www.durham.ca)
- [Child Care Reopening Toolkit](#)
- Early learning updates. The [most recent edition](#) includes a number of general updates.
- Ministry of Education's [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#)
- Subscribe to Durham's [Resources for Child Care Professionals](#) page for the latest updates, including the [GROW newsletter](#).