



Supervisors' Network: Operational Guidance for Durham Region Child Care

November 27, 2020, Virtual Meeting

Background

As the service manager for licensed child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres in Durham Region, the Children's Services Division (CSD) is committed to supporting the safe reopening of early learning programs. In November 2020, the Ministry of Education (MEDU) released updated operational guidance for licensed child care centres reopening during the COVID-19 pandemic. In collaboration with the CSD, the MEDU and the Durham Region Health Department came together to host a Supervisors' Network focused on the updated guidance requirements and its applicability in Durham Region.

This document responds to questions posed during the meeting, in addition to links to Durham Region resources.

If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your Quality Assurance Advisor.

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Staffing

Limiting interactions

The updated operational guidance states:

- Staff and post-secondary students should work at only one location, with one cohort.
- Interactions with multiple groups should be avoided, as much as possible.
- Supply/replacement staff should be assigned to a specific group to limit interaction with multiple groups of children.

Can centres regroup children into a single cohort when ratios are low?

As much as possible, groups must stay together without mixing with others. The intention is to limit exposure between groups. In cases, such as before and after school programs, cohorts do mix. In this case, physical distancing must be practiced to eliminate exposure, alongside the enhanced cleaning and disinfecting practices. Whenever possible, take advantage of well-ventilated spaces such as gymnasiums and the outdoors. Remember, that cohorts cannot mix when a program is under outbreak.

Can an educator work in different locations? For example, a morning at one site and the afternoon at a different site?

If operationally feasible, educators should not transfer to other locations. However, this may be the instance under the centre's control.

- Staff should work at **only one location**.
- However, there may be instances where due to operational needs/unplanned circumstances beyond centres control staff may be asked to attend another location (e.g. a centre is short-staffed). This should not be a common practice.

Vulnerable sector checks

The updated operational guidance states:

- Licensees are required to obtain VSCs following the Child Care and Early Years Act (2014) from staff and other persons who are interacting with children at a premise, including post-secondary students.
- If an individual is unable to obtain a VSC in a reasonable amount of time due to significant backlogs, licensees must ensure the individual has applied for a VSC and put in place additional measures as set out in their reference check policy.

Can I receive a vulnerable sector check in Durham Region?

Yes. The Durham Region Police Services is reporting a two-day turnaround time for processing as of November 2020. Applications may be [submitted online](#) with the appropriate identification documentation. Health cards and Social Insurance Number cards are no longer accepted as valid forms of identification. Only a driver's license,

passport or government photo ID card can be used. For more information on vulnerable sector checks in Durham Region, including restrictions in place if fingerprints are required, please visit the [Durham Region Police Services](#) website.

Daily screening

The updated operational guidance states:

- Daily screening should take place before arrival at child care.
- Removal of the requirement to maintain records of daily screening.

Durham Region requirements

The recommendations within the provincial daily screening tool for school and child care for exclusion from care do not align with the Durham Region Health Department’s requirements for licensed child care.

How are the Ontario and Durham Region recommendations for exclusion different?

A [memo](#) has been published to explain the differences between the provincial and Durham Region requirements for exclusion upon screening.

How does this memo compare to the memo disseminated in October 2020 related to daily screening?

- The daily screening questions have remained the same, with improved consistency of language in the next steps for parents’ sections for each symptom group.
- The November 2020 memo has removed the requirement for operators to report a Serious Occurrence if parents have been tested for or have a confirmed case of COVID-19. This question has been removed from the daily screening protocol.
- The November 2020 Operational Guidelines have removed the requirement for licensees to maintain records of daily screening.

How does this memo outlining the symptoms and corresponding advice compare to the COVID-19 Screening Tool for Children in School and Child Care (Version 2, November 2020)?

The following table outlines the difference between the daily screening assessments created by Durham Region for licensed child care compared to the Ontario COVID-19 assessment for school and child care.

Table 1: Differences between Regional and Provincial screening tools

	Durham Region	Ontario
Presence of fever and/or chills, cough, shortness of	If any symptom is present, regardless of the severity, the child fails the screening.	Only if a child’s symptoms are new or worsening the child fails the screening. This

	Durham Region	Ontario
breath or decrease or loss of smell or taste.	Children must be symptom-free in order to attend child care.	implies the child may return with a mild fever, chills, cough, shortness of breath, or slight loss in smell or taste.
Presence of nausea, vomiting and/or diarrhea.	If a child shows any gastrointestinal symptoms, they fail the screening and are excluded until they have been symptom-free for 48-hours.	A child fails the screening and is encouraged to stay home for 24-hours from when the symptom(s) started. The child can return when symptoms have improved, and the child feels well enough to attend.

Do I need to collect a doctor’s note or proof of a negative COVID-19 test before a child returns to child care?

No. As outlined by the Ministry of Health, COVID-19 Screening Tool for Children in School and Child Care (Version 2, November 2020) and by the Ministry of Education, when a child is no longer showing symptoms that would otherwise require that child to stay home, barriers to returning to child care, such as the requirement of medical notes or proof of negative COVID-19 tests, are not required. Please note that centres have the right to request proof.

How long do I have to keep screening records?

As per the Ministry of Education Operational Guidelines (Version 2, November 2020), the requirement to maintain records of daily screening has been revoked.

Which screening tool should staff and essential visitors use before entering child care?

The Ministry of Education has encouraged staff and essential visitors to use the online [Ontario COVID-19 self-assessment](#) tool. The exclusion criteria specific to Durham Region, however, are not incorporated into the Provincial tool. If providers choose to adapt this Durham Region assessment tool for adults, the following symptoms must be applied under question 2, mild symptoms:

- Pink eye (conjunctivitis, not related to known causes or conditions, for example, reoccurring styes).
- Stomach pain (not related to other known causes or conditions, for example, menstrual cramps).

Are we still required to take children’s temperature upon arrival?

If the parent, staff or essential visitor has completed the self-screening tool before arrival, you do not have to take their temperature. If the parent, staff or essential visitor has not completed the self-screening tool before arrival, please ask them all screening questions and take temperatures of children, staff and essential visitors.

Do we have to keep a record of the temperatures?

No. You do not have to maintain records of daily screenings.

For clarification, we don't need to keep records or we cannot, based on the provincial mandate?

The November 2020 MEDU guidance document indicates that records of daily screening are no longer required. You may still maintain records, but it is no longer a requirement subject to licensing or the Durham Region Health Department inspections.

As Ministry or Regional guidance is updated in accordance with the screening tool, will the tool be updated? Do operators have to update as changes are made?

As new operational guidance emerges, the CSD will work closely with the Durham Region Health Department to update the memo. To ensure you are receiving updates, please ensure you select “receive email updates” and subscribe to the durham.ca/ChildrensServices and durham.ca/quality websites.

Resources for parents

Two new resources will be made available to Durham Region families in the coming week. The first is a [parent frequently asked questions website](#), specifically designed to help answer questions for parents of children attending licensed child care. Also, a daily screening tool will help parents identify if their child is okay to attend licensed child care; this tool is currently under review with Durham’s IT Department.

Cleaning

Cleaning logs

The updated operational guidance states:

- It is required by the Durham Region Health Department that licensees keep a cleaning and disinfecting log to track and demonstrate cleaning schedules.
- It may also be helpful to keep an inventory to determine items to be stored, moved, or removed altogether to reduce handling or the challenges associated with cleaning them.
- The MEDU licensing also requires, under 88.5(1) of the Child Care and Early Years Act that “Every licensee shall ensure that each child care centre it operates and each premise where it oversees the provision of home child care or in-home services has a coronavirus (COVID-19) policy that is consistent with any direction of a medical officer of health and that includes the following information: (1) actions that will be implemented to sanitize the centre or premises and the indoor and outdoor equipment, materials and furnishings therein.”

A digital copy of the Durham Region Health Department’s [Cleaning and Disinfection](#) in Child Care Centres poster can be found on the durham.ca website.

Cleaning washrooms

- It is recommended that shared spaces or equipment (i.e., washrooms or shared objects), should be cleaned in between each use and only one group at a time should access the shared space/equipment.

Do washrooms have to be cleaned between each child or between each group?

Cleaning must occur between each group (i.e., cohort) of children. Daily routine cleaning should be completed at the end of each day or between groups if the washroom is shared with another classroom.

What are the cleaning requirements for washrooms for before and after school programs?

Washrooms are cleaned at the end of each day and spot cleaned throughout the day by school custodian staff.

Outdoor cleaning

- The requirement to disinfect outdoor play structures between groups has been removed.
- The focus on exceptional hand hygiene before and after use play structure use is advised.

What is the difference between outdoor play structures and equipment?

Outdoor play structures include climbers, swings, slides, and other large-scale equipment that are often bolted to the play surface. As we move toward the winter months, the key focus should be on practicing exceptional hand hygiene with children before and after using play structures.

Outdoor equipment may include things like tricycles and outdoor play materials, which can be brought indoors for proper disinfection. These mobile items are required to undergo cleaning and disinfecting in between cohorts, or otherwise, weekly.

In the case of nursery schools, where children attend every other day or only part-time, do these cleaning requirements still apply?

Yes. Please ensure proper cleaning and disinfecting protocols are followed to reduce the spread.

General cleaning

Are children able to bring in their backpacks?

Yes, if they are kept solely within the child's cubby area.

Communication plans

Outbreaks

The updated operational guidance states:

- Prepare a communication plan in the event of a case/outbreak.
- The CSD has prepared a [one-page document](#) to help operators walk through the process of responding to a child who has tested positive for COVID-19.
- An outbreak may be declared by the Durham Region Health Department when: within a 14-day period, there are two or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in children, staff/providers or other visitors with an epidemiological link (e.g., cases in the same room, cases that are part of the same before/after school care cohort) where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the child care setting OR when a cluster of three or more children and/or staff are identified.

What does the term ‘epidemiological link’ mean?

There is a connection between the cases because they were exposed to one another. There may be an epidemiological link if a child and/or staff both test positive for COVID-19 and are within the same cohort.

If multiple children have a runny nose, will an outbreak be called?

If it's just one child with one mild symptom, such as a runny nose, they are required to be away from child care for a minimum of 24 hours. When the symptom improves, they may return. The Durham Region Health Department does not need to be notified. However, if within a 48-hour timeframe two or more children from the same group experience symptoms, the Durham Region Health Department must be contacted. In this case, an outbreak may be suspected, and public health will work closely with operators on the next steps.

What is the protocol of informing a centre if there is a positive case in the school?

Each school board and the school principal have a contingent communications plan in place in case there is a positive case of COVID-19 within the school. The school board, school administration, and licensed child care within the school will be notified, as appropriate.

Outbreak Control Package

The revised outbreak control package is a tool used to guide child care centre operators through an outbreak:

- The package contains important outbreak control measures in a convenient checklist format.
- The package has been revised to reflect COVID-19 guidance.
- Note: When you obtain your revised Wee Care Manual (2019 edition), replace the existing one with the revised version, which CSD will provide to everyone as part of this package (see accompanying document).

The revised Wee Care Manual will be distributed to all sites:

- Centres have been invited to pick-up a manual from the 605 Rossland Road East, Whitby office.
- If you have not yet received an email to pick-up a manual, there will be an email coming shortly.
- Note: The manual was revised and printed before COVID-19, therefore, it does not specifically reflect COVID-19 guidance.
- Revised Outbreak Control Package will be provided by CSD for replacement.

Masks, personal protective equipment (PPE) and hand hygiene

Staff

All child care staff, home child care providers, home child care visitors and students completing post-secondary placements are required to wear medical masks and eye protection (i.e., face shield or goggles) while inside a child care setting, including in hallways and staff rooms (unless eating – but time with masks off should be limited and physical distance should be maintained).

If alone in a staff room or anywhere else in the centre for that matter, are staff required to wear full PPE when not eating?

Yes. If staff are alone with no one else present, they can remove PPE.

Can more than one person be in a room during programming and remove masks if all staff are sitting at different tables that are well over two metres apart?

Technically, staff do not have to wear PPE when physically distanced from other staff, but it is best practice to always wear their mask. The focus is to reduce the risk of transmission, especially asymptomatic transmission.

May staff remove PPE within a classroom if physical distancing is possible (e.g., sleep time)?

No. The best practice is for staff to not remove their mask and/or face shield/goggles when children are present. This clarification has been brought on by a surge of community spread and asymptomatic transmission.

If a staff member is reacting to the medical mask, are they able to wear a cotton substitute?

Cotton is not a suitable replacement. It is recommended that the licensee explore appropriate (Health Canada approved) alternatives to the medical mask.

Essential visitors

All other adults (i.e., parents/guardians, and visitors) are required to wear a face covering or non-medical mask while inside the premises. The Durham Region Health Department has several [posters and written guidance documents](#) on selecting an appropriate non-medical mask.

What type of PPE are students completing post-secondary placements required to wear?

Though students are considered to be essential visitors, they must wear medical masks and a face shield or goggles throughout the day (i.e., follow the same PPE requirements as staff).

Children

- All children in grades 4 and above are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering while inside a child care setting, including in hallways.
- All younger children (grade 3 and below) are encouraged but not required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering while inside a child care setting, including in hallways.
- Masks are not recommended for children under the age of two

What do children do with their masks while playing outside?

It is recommended that children place their masks in their pocket while playing outside. Remember to have the child replace their masks if it becomes visibly soiled or wet. The MEDU has provided cloth masks, in case a child has forgotten to bring a mask from home.

How can we encourage children to wear masks?

For children over the age of two, the resources from the Durham Region Health Department on [tips for parents](#) and from Durham Behaviour Management Services (attached to the email) are a great place to learn strategies on encouraging the use of masks.

Can kindergarten children wear a face shield without a mask?

The intention of a mask is to reduce droplet spread from the mouth and nose. A face shield acts as eye protection and alone is insufficient at reducing the risk of transmission.

Exemptions

- Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks are expected to be put in place by licensees.
- Licensees should document their requirements and exemptions related to masks.

What is required to be documented about exemptions?

For exemptions from masks, MEDU licensing inspectors will look for a record of exemption. The Program Advisor will discuss with the licensee that there was a review of exemptions, but a record does not have to include the reason why the exemption has occurred. Therefore, licensees do not need to maintain a written record of exemptions.

Can staff who are exempt from wearing PPE due to medical concerns be excluded from working with children?

Questions specific to individual staff should be discussed with labour relations or the health and safety committee of the program.

Special needs resourcing (SNR)

- Revised guidance on the inclusion of SNR staff in child care settings to clarify that licensees have the discretion to determine which SNR staff are essential to physically provide service in the child care setting.
- In Durham Region, all SNR services are providing virtual supports:
 - Durham Behaviour Management Services
 - Grandview Children’s Centre – Preschool Outreach Program
 - Resources for Exceptional Children and Youth
 - Surrey Place – Blind and Low-Vision Services

How Does Learning Happen?

We are pleased to share the links below to the updated resource *Building on How Does Learning Happen? – Pedagogical Approaches to Reopening Early Years and Child Care Programs in Ontario* in [English](#) and [French](#).

You will see that this resource has been revised to include child care and EarlyON Child and Family Centres, before and after school programs with connections to kindergarten. It has been designed to invite system leaders and educators to re-visit [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years \(HDLH\)](#) to support re-opening early years programs across the province.

Reflective questions are embedded throughout this resource to encourage discussion, sharing of ideas and most importantly to leverage relationships as we move forward together during these evolving times.

Some of the updates in this version of the resource are as follows:

- broader scope to include EarlyON, Before and After School Programs (BASP) and connections to Kindergarten
- testimonials re: lessons learned through EarlyON virtual programs
- new section on resiliency
- expanded section on inquiry-based learning
- additional links to resources including the *Kindergarten Program Document (2016)*

We look forward to discussing this resource with you and hearing how it is being used in your community.

Food

Are children able to self-serve food?

The recommendation currently states that meals and snacks be prepared on a clean countertop, plated, and then delivered to the child. The intention is to reduce children sharing utensils, serving dishes, and/or plates.

What if children would like more food after they have been served?

An additional portion must be served on a new/clean plate.