

CHILDREN’S SERVICES POLICY MANUAL

Section: REGIONALLY OPERATED CHILD CARE CENTRES	Name of Policy: PANDEMIC
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APPROVED BY: Director, Children’s Services **DATE:** March 25, 2020
EFFECTIVE DATE: March 25, 2020 **LATEST REVISION:** March 25, 2020

Authority: *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.*
Ontario Regulation 137/15.
Child Care Manual, Fifth Addition, Niagara Public Health Department.
College of Early Childhood Educators Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice
For registered early childhood educators in Ontario, July 2017
Early Childhood Educators Act, 2007

Intent: Pandemic is distinguished as an infectious disease/illness that becomes a worldwide epidemic that spreads easily and rapidly through many countries and regions of the world affecting a large percentage of the population. A pandemic occurs when an infectious disease emerges to which the population has little or no immunity. It may spread easily from person to person and may cause serious illness and death. Pandemics are unpredictable and can affect any age group with the severity affecting each individual differently. During a pandemic, infectious diseases or illnesses can be prevented through appropriate hygiene, sanitation and infection prevention/control practices. Provisions of daily health screenings for children/staff and heightened disinfecting are put in place to protect the health, safety and well-being of children and staff.

Pandemic Policy objectives are to:

- Ensure all Staff are educated about pandemic risk factors and prevention procedures.
- Control infection risks through the application of preventative measures
- Integrate pandemic prevention strategies in day-to-day operation
- Ensure staff recognize that the educational information provided is to be utilized in the workplace to protect themselves and the children.

Policy: All staff in Regional Child Care Centres must adhere strictly to the guidelines and practices below in order to reduce the risk of contracting or transmitting an infectious disease or illness during a pandemic. Additionally, staff must familiarize themselves with the recommendations in the Public Health Department Health & Safety Manual for Child Care Providers.

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The Pandemic policy and procedures are required to be reviewed with employees, before they begin their employment. The date on the records of review indicates that the written pandemic policy has been reviewed by all staff before they begin their employment. Children’s services teams are required to follow Public Health Medical Officer of Health direction and protocols.

Pandemic Procedure:

The Supervisor/Manager will advise staff and ensure they use the guidelines in the above noted policy.

Staff will make themselves aware of the pandemic by:

- Reading the centre communication log book daily and initial both at the beginning of their shift and after lunch break.
- Reading Niagara Region emails regarding Pandemic information
- Reading all Pandemic guidelines and expectations set by the Niagara Region.
- Reading all meeting minutes posted; in particular Health and Safety, and staff meeting minutes.
- Partaking in any required training to maintain current information on health and safety related to the pandemic.

Staff Health Screening:

- Staff will be screened upon entering the child care centre with questions related to the pandemic.
- Staff will sanitize their hands upon entry
- Staff temperatures will be taken as part of the screen. If staff have a temperature or any symptoms listed, they will be required to go home.
- Staff will be unable to return to work until they are symptom free for 24 hours or have been advised by a physician or public health to return to work. There may be specific direction from Public Health regarding timelines for return to work (i.e. COVID-19 14 day self-isolation if symptoms are developed.)

Staff Responsibility during Family Health Screening:

- Staff will disinfect the thermometer between each use as per manufacturer’s instructions.
- Staff will sanitize their hands between each individual screened.

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- Staff will clean and disinfect door knobs and any area that is touched by a parent or child during the screening process before screening the next family. (I.e. pens, table, doorbell etc.)
- Staff will use personal protective equipment provided as required by Public Health direction (i.e. masks, gloves).
- Staff will receive children from parent at the entrance of the child care centre whenever possible.

Children and Families Health Screening:

- All family members will be screened upon entering the child care centre with questions related to the pandemic.
- When possible, we request only one parent drop off child/ren to assist with quicker screening wait times and to avoid increased exposure.
- Families will be required to physically distance themselves from other families waiting.
- Parents and children over the age of 2 years will be required to use hand sanitizer upon entry to the child care centre or as directed by manufacturer.
- Children under the age of 2 years will be required to wash their hands immediately at the first available sink upon entry with the assistance of a RECE or parent.
- Staff will take the temperature of each child. If the child has a temperature or any symptoms listed on the screening form, the child will not be permitted to stay at the child care centre.
- The child will remain away from the child care centre until they are symptom free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication before returning to the child care centre. There may be specific direction from Public Health regarding timelines for return to the child care centre (i.e. COVID-19 14 day self-isolation if symptoms are developed.)
- Families that are not permitted to remain at the child care centre will be directed to contact Niagara Region Public Health or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (24-7) for direction during the pandemic.
- If a child develops symptoms after accepted into care, they will be isolated under the supervision of a RECE. The child’s parent or emergency contact person will be contacted for immediate pick-up. Niagara Region Public Health does not recommend the wearing of surgical or N95 masks or respirators by well individuals, however may be required in specific circumstances.

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Reducing Risk of Spreading the Illness:

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze by using a tissue or coughing into your sleeve or elbow; dispose of the tissue immediately into a garbage can and wash your hands.
- Teach and encourage the children to cover their coughs and sneezes by coughing into their sleeve or elbow when developmentally appropriate and wash their hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze and assist the children with doing the same.
- When soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand rub/sanitizer with 70% alcohol is required by Public Health.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent the spreading of germs.
- Social/Physical distancing yourself when possible to prevent the spread of illness. Distancing yourself 2 meters from other individuals is required wherever reasonably possible.
- If you become ill, you will be required to stay home until you are symptom free for 24 hours. If symptoms worsen, contact a physician or public health at Niagara Region Public Health or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 (24-7) for direction during the pandemic. There may be specific direction from Public Health regarding timelines for return to work (i.e. COVID-19 14 day self-isolation if symptoms are developed.)
- Limit contact with others during this time as a preventative measure.
- Visitor will not be permitted into the child care centre during a Pandemic.

Pandemic Heightened Handwashing, Hand Sanitizer and Disposable Glove Use:

Staff will implement strict heightened hand washing practices after all activities for themselves and the children. Alcohol based hand rub may be used in the event that hand soap is not readily available. Hand washing with soap and water should be first choice if available. Activities where hand washing should be implemented are included but not limited to those outlined below:

- Upon entering the Child Care Centre.
- After screening each individual upon entry to the child care centre
- Before/After direct physical contact with clients/children.
- After each transition whenever possible.
- Before/after preparing, serving or eating food.
- Before/after staff break/lunch times.

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- After diapering a child, cleaning up messes or wiping a nose.
- After toileting a child or self.
- After sneezing or coughing.
- After a child sneezes or coughs in close proximity.
- After taking out garbage.
- Before/after giving any medications.
- Before/after applying sunscreen or insect repellent to each individual child.
- After contact with blood/body fluids.
- When hands are visibly soiled.
- After using protective gloves.
- After completion of work shift to avoid taking micro-organisms home.
- If handling chemicals, wash hands **before** eating, drinking smoking or using the washroom.

Staff will use correct hand washing procedures as outlined below:

- Use a hand wash sink supplied with hot and cold running water, paper towels and liquid soap in a dispenser.
- Use soap and water for soiled hands. Wet hands under running water.
- Apply soap to palm of hand.
- Use friction to clean between fingers, palms, backs of hands, wrists forearms and under nails and base of thumbs for approximately 20 seconds.
- Rinse under running water for a count of 5 seconds.
- Dry with a clean towel or paper towel.
- Turn off taps with a paper towel.
- Dispose of paper towel in an appropriate container.

Staff may use correct 70% alcohol based hand rub procedures as below:

- Alcohol-based hand rubs should only be used if your hands are not visibly soiled and if soap and water are not readily available.
- If possible remove hand and wrist jewelry.
- Apply one to two pumps of hand rub (about the size of a “loonie”) onto one palm. Rub your hands together. Clean all surfaces of your hands, concentrating on fingertips, between the fingers, nail beds, back of your hands and base of thumbs.
- Continue rubbing hands until product is dry; this will take a minimum of 20 seconds if sufficient product is used.

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- If your hands look dirty and running water is not available, use a moistened towelette to remove dirt, followed by the use of an alcohol based hand rub.

NOTE: When soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand rubs are the preferred method for cleaning your hands, provided they contain alcohol concentrations of 70% or higher as recommended by Public Health.

NOTE: Disposable non-latex gloves are to be used for infection control purposes (available in each Child Care Centre); however, the use of disposable non-latex gloves does not replace the need for hand washing.

Disposable Glove Use:

Staff will:

- Wash hands before/after glove use.
- Gloves are intended for single use per task.
- Store disposable non-latex gloves in a cool, dry place.
- Use as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Remove after use and dispose of in the regular garbage (never wash and reuse).
- Wash hands as indicated above after disposable non-latex gloves are removed.

NOTE: Remove gloves from wrist and peel inside out prior to disposal.

Pandemic Program Guidelines and Practices:

1. Water Play and Sensory Play

- Group sensory play will be **suspended** until the end of the Pandemic to prevent spread of illness through these activities.

2. Lunch Time

- Children will not be permitted to self-serve during pandemic outbreak.
- Staff will ensure tables have been cleaned and disinfected before/after eating.
- Staff will ensure all children/staff wash hands before/after eating.

3. Outdoor Equipment and Sandboxes/Sandpits

- Outdoor sand toys must be cleaned and disinfected after each use during a pandemic outbreak.

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- All equipment used by children during outdoor play must be cleaned and disinfected when outdoor play is finished.
- Any materials/toys that are mouthed by a child must be removed, cleaned, and disinfected before being used again.
- Remove all toys/items from play that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected (e.g. plush toys or absorbent in nature)

4. Limit the amount of group play/activities as much as possible.

5. Waste disposal

- There should be an accessible garbage container in each room that is emptied regularly.
- Children should be reminded not to touch garbage areas.
- Metal garbage containers with tight fitting lids are required.
- Keep all garbage containers covered and away from food storage and food preparation areas.
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize all garbage containers daily.

6. Daily Cleaning and disinfecting of surfaces:

- Cleaning is the essential first step in minimizing the risk of spreading during a pandemic
- Without cleaning, dirt or organic matter can interfere with the disinfectant's ability to kill pathogens (germs) present on surfaces.
- If you are cleaning multiple surfaces, move from the least - to most - soiled areas to reduce the risk of spreading contamination.

Proper Cleaning Steps:

- Wash all surfaces with soap and water using friction to remove dirt or organics.
- Rinse with clean potable (drinkable) water.
- Air dry or use single-use paper towel.

Disinfecting:

- A disinfectant is a chemical product used to reduce pathogens to a safe level.
- There are many different products available, including some disinfectants that function as a cleaner as well. Be sure to follow directions on the label regarding contact time, expiration dates and proper use.
- Pre-mixed or concentrated solutions.

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Pre-mixed: Some disinfectants can be purchased through a supplier in a formula that is pre-mixed to a desired concentration. These should be used as directed as per manufacturer’s instructions.

Concentrated: These products are a concentrated formula, which you will need to mix with water to a designated ratio as indicated on the product label.

- If you are responsible for mixing and preparing the disinfectant solution, you need to use corresponding test strips to verify that it contains the proper concentration. The correct concentration is important for safe and proper disinfection. (1:10 bleach/water for disinfecting; Port Colborne Child Care will use an accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide product for enhanced disinfection)

NOTE: Port Colborne Child Care will use an accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide product for non-food contact surfaces, and Quat based sanitizer for food contact surfaces based on school board regulation not permitting bleach and Public Health recommendation.

7. Disinfecting toys/equipment

- Toys/equipment and other high touch surfaces such as door handles, handrails in the child care centre will be disinfected at each site daily and a schedule will be developed for constant and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting by the supervisor in consultation with Public Health
- Buckets/containers will be used in each area/room for toys that have been mouthed by the children or are soiled. This equipment/toys will be cleaned and disinfected before being put back into use.

Pandemic Management:

- If a child becomes ill, isolate child/ren and arrange for immediate pick up.
- Establish control measures per Public Health direction for each child care centre:
 - Exclude all ill children and staff from child care centre as per Public Health directive.
 - A Public Health Inspector (PHI) may be on site daily to ensure that all infection prevention and control measures have been Implemented as discussed with PHN. Please ensure that all staff has knowledge and are implementing these recommendations.

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- Review hand hygiene with staff. Increased hand washing is required during a pandemic. Children and staff must have access to warm running water, single use soap and paper towels. Cloth hand towels must only be used one time and then laundered.
- Families must clean their hands when they enter and leave the Child Care Centre with an alcohol based hand rub provided.
- Must not partake in any social outings.
- Practice social/physical distancing whenever possible.
- Implement an enhanced cleaning and disinfecting program(at minimum twice daily or as needed) of high touch surfaces such as door handles, handrails, sink/toilet handles, etc. (1:10 bleach/water for disinfecting, Port Colborne Child Care will use an accelerated Hydrogen Peroxide product for enhanced disinfection). Cleaning and disinfecting should be documented.

Communication with parents:

- It is essential that parents be kept informed of the status of the pandemic. It is also important that they understand the policy surrounding exclusion and understand why ill children are not to be present in the child care facility.
- A communication letter will be provided to families explaining these key points.

Outside Services:

- Essential delivery services will be required to complete a health screen before entering the child care centre.
- If they are unable to enter due to screening result, the company will be contacted and arrangements will be made for another delivery or alternative to the delivery.
- If safe to do so, the product can be left outdoors and be brought into the child care centre by a staff member.

Redeployment:

- If the Niagara Region is in a Pandemic outbreak, there is a possibility that staff will be redeployed based on the need of each child care centre, to remain in compliance with the Ministry of Education, Collective Agreement and Corporation.

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NOTE: Policies and Procedures are subject to review to be modified/revised when needed as the Pandemic evolves.

The Medical Officer of Health is the authority that deems when a pandemic has ended.

Employee Resources:

Ontario Emergency Management:

<https://www.emergencymanagementontario.ca/english/insideemo/legislationandregulation/legislationandregulation.html>

Niagara Region Public Health:

https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/default.aspx?home_task=1

Niagara Region Pandemic Planning:

<https://www.niagararegion.ca/health/vaccinations/pandemic-planning.aspx>