

Ministry of Education
Early Years and Child Care Division

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TO: Consolidated Municipal Service Managers and District Social Services Administration Boards (CMSMs and DSSABs)

FROM: Phil Graham
Assistant Deputy Minister
Early Years and Child Care Division

DATE: February 3, 2021

SUBJECT: Child Care Updates

Thank you for your continued patience and support as we navigate the ever-changing COVID-19 pandemic outbreak together. The Ministry of Education has committed to keeping you updated as the situation evolves to help you plan for and address the impacts on the early years and child care sector. Today, I am pleased to update you on the return to in-person learning in all (remaining) regions of the province and associated considerations for early years and child care programs.

Return to In-Person Learning in Elementary Schools

Based on the most recent data and advice from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, elementary and secondary schools in all remaining PHUs across Ontario will be permitted to resume in-person instruction on Monday February 8, 2021, with the exception of schools in Toronto Public Health, Peel Public Health and York Region Public Health, who will be permitted to resume in-person instruction on Tuesday February 16, 2021. See Appendix A for a list of PHUs and their reopening dates.

With the return to in-person learning in these remaining PHU regions, the **targeted emergency child care program for school-aged children** will come to an end on February 5, 2021. For the regions of Toronto, Peel and York Region Public Health, targeted emergency child care will end on February 12, 2021.

All **before/after school programs** may resume their usual operations in alignment with the return to in-person learning in their PHUs, including the charging of parent fees. **EarlyON Child and Family Centres** must continue to remain closed and may not offer indoor and outdoor in-person programming. EarlyON Centres are strongly encouraged to continue offering virtual programming during this time.

Updated Health and Safety Guidance

We have introduced enhanced health and safety measures to support the return to in-person learning across Ontario. See Appendix B for a summary of health and safety guidance.

I would also like to take this opportunity to highlight the importance of maintaining all of the protocols in place in all indoor areas in a child care setting, including staff rooms. All child care staff, home child care providers, home child care visitors and placement students are required to wear medical masks and eye protection 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). As a reminder, eye protection can include a face shield or goggles, and this is to be worn in addition to a medical mask. These measures are imperative to keeping our child care programs and schools open and safe.

As always, child care and early years partners may, particularly at the advice or direction of their local PHU, choose to implement additional measures based on local circumstances.

Once again, thank you for your continued support and collaboration as we work through these challenging times together.

Sincerely,

Phil Graham

Appendix A: List of PHU Reopening Dates

PHUs that will be permitted to reopen elementary and secondary schools on Monday, February 8, 2021:

- Brant County Health Unit
- Chatham-Kent Public Health
- Durham Region Health Department
- Haldimand-Norfolk Health Unit
- Halton Region Public Health
- City of Hamilton Public Health Services
- Huron Perth Public Health
- Lambton Public Health
- Niagara Region Public Health
- Simcoe-Muskoka District Health Unit
- Region of Waterloo Public Health and Emergency Services
- Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph Public Health
- Windsor-Essex County Health Unit

PHUs that will be permitted to reopen elementary and secondary schools on Tuesday, February 16, 2021:

- Peel Public Health
- Toronto Public Health
- York Region Public Health

Appendix B: Enhanced Health and Safety Measures

All child care and early years programs are required to have health and safety measures in place as outlined in the operational guidance documents and are required to communicate these measures consistently to parents/guardians, students and staff.

Enhanced health and safety measures that were introduced January 20, 2021 are noted below.

Self-Screening

- If a child, staff, visitor or placement student is experiencing any [symptoms of COVID-19](#), they must stay home from school or child care and should seek testing and appropriate medical attention.
- Effective January 25, licensees and before and after school providers are to validate daily self-screening for all child care centre staff, visitors and placement students.
 - At a minimum these individuals will provide daily confirmation or proof that they have completed and passed the online screener in a form deemed appropriate (and accessible) by the licensee prior to or upon entry to the child care centre.
- Parents and guardians continue to be responsible for screening their children for symptoms of illness every day.

Masking

- Mandatory masking requirements are now in place for all students in Grades 1-3. This is in addition to the existing masking requirements for students in Grades 4-12.
- Children younger than grade 1 are encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face covering while inside a child care setting, including in hallways.
- Masking requirements also apply to before- and after-school programs, as well as on school vehicles. Students in Kindergarten are not required but are encouraged to wear masks.
- Masking is also required outdoors where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Updated [Operational Guidance For Child Care During COVID-19 Outbreak v.5](#) and [Before and After School Programs, Kindergarten – Grade 6](#) guidance documents reflecting these additional health and safety measures will be available soon for use.