

**TO:** Child Care Licensees

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

**DATE:** February 22, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Ministry of Education Updates, Revised School and Child Care Screener  
and Updated Health and Safety Measures

---

Thank you very much for your continued dedication and commitment to supporting children, families, and staff working in the child care sector.

The government is committed to the safety and well being of all staff, providers, children and families. Our priority continues to be keeping schools and child care open and safe. The purpose of this memo is to provide you with updated guidance for early years and child care settings that builds upon a number of public health and safety measures as outlined below, specifically:

1. The provincial school and child care screening tool
2. Isolation requirements for household members
3. Masking and other PPE requirements
4. Use of gymnasiums in schools for before and after school programs

### **1. Provincial school and child care screening tool**

All children, child care staff, providers, placement students and visitors are required to screen for symptoms of illness every day before coming to child care. As part of our efforts to strengthen public health and safety measures and update guidance to reflect provincial trends and transmission risks, the government has made changes to the COVID-19 school and child care screening criteria.

This includes new provincial direction that child care staff/providers and children with **any new or worsening symptom** of COVID-19, as indicated in the school and child care screening tool, even those with only one symptom, must stay home until:

- They receive a negative COVID-19 test result
- They receive an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional, or

- It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.

Some public health units have been applying the single-symptom screening criteria. The Chief Medical Officer of Health has now directed that the single-symptom screening criteria be applied provincewide.

The provincial screening tool has been updated to reflect this direction.

We encourage you to continue to work with your local public health unit, or where applicable Health Canada, to align your screening tool with the updated provincial tool and guidance and any additional guidance provided by your local public health unit based on local risk factors. We also encourage you to inform parents, child care staff, providers, placement students, and visitors about these changes.

As a reminder, child care staff, providers, placement students and visitors are now required to provide daily confirmation/proof of having self-screened prior to or upon their arrival. Any individual that does not pass this on-site screening procedure will be asked to return home and self-isolate until they meet the criteria for return.

## **2. Isolation requirement for household contacts of symptomatic individuals**

As of February 12, the Ministry of Health has issued updated guidance to public health units regarding COVID-19 variants of concern (*COVID-19 Variant of Concern: Case, Contact and Outbreak Management Interim Guidance, Version 2.0 – February 12, 2021*), requiring all household contacts of symptomatic individuals to quarantine.

Through this memo, this guidance is being applied to children, child care staff, providers and placement students by requiring them to stay at home from child care if anyone in their household has new or worsening symptoms of COVID-19 and has been recommended for isolation and testing.

All asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine until the symptomatic household member:

- receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or
- receives an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional

If the symptomatic individual **tests positive**, or is **not tested** and does not receive an alternative diagnosis from a health care professional, the symptomatic individual must isolate (including from household members) for 10 days from symptom onset, and all household contacts must isolate until 14 days from their last contact with the symptomatic individual.

These updates are included in the provincial school and child care screening tool.

### **3. Masking/PPE requirements**

As you are aware, masks are also now mandatory for all children in grades 1 – 12 and encouraged for younger children (aged 2 to SK), subject to reasonable exceptions. The ministry recognizes that some children will be unable to wear masks for medical reasons and it is expected that these will be relatively rare cases. Licensees are asked to carefully review their masking exceptions policies and ensure that children are supported to wear masks to the greatest extent possible. Licensees may discuss with parents/guardians, in consultation with the child's health care provider, whether other types of face coverings might work for the child.

In addition, resources are available that can be shared with parents/guardians on supporting children in wearing masks and on health and safety practices for children who cannot wear masks. See for example this [tip sheet](#) from Holland Bloorview Kids Rehabilitation Hospital. Your public health unit may have additional resources and advice.

### **4. Use of gymnasiums for before and after school programs**

Before and after school programs may provide opportunities for physical activity for children and youth. Building on guidance from the Chief Medical Officer of Health, children and staff should not be engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity indoors. When moderate to vigorous physical activity takes place outdoors, children and staff should maintain physical distancing. Masks should not be worn for high intensity activity.

Gymnasiums should only be used for moderate activity where physical distancing measures and current masking protocols for children and program staff can be followed.

As program staff plan physical activities that support physical distancing, they should include masking for children and staff in indoor settings as well as outdoors when physical distancing cannot be maintained. Efforts should be made to limit the use of shared equipment. Shared equipment should be disinfected regularly and children and program staff should practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.

At this time, sanitizing outdoor structures on playgrounds is not required, but rather, before and after school programs should focus on maintaining distance and limiting total gathering size on playgrounds and following masking protocols when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

The measures outlined in this memo constitute updates to the return to school direction issued by the Ministry of Education and approved by the Chief Medical Officer of Health. Updates to the [Operational Guidance For Child Care During COVID-19 Outbreak](#), [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak – For First Nations](#), and [Before and After School Programs, Kindergarten – Grade 6](#) guidance documents will be made

available shortly. As mentioned, the COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool has been updated to reflect these changes.

These changes are critical to ensuring the safety of children and their families as well as child care staff and providers. We recognize that these are significant requests and appreciate your ongoing partnership as we continue to ensure the safety of children, families and staff throughout this pandemic. We truly value the perseverance of our sector partners in working with us through numerous updates.

Sincerely,

Phil Graham