April 8, 2020

To: All childcare centres supporting families of essential workers

Re: COVID-19 Guidance for Emergency Childcare Centres

Ottawa Public Health recognizes that there are key healthcare and essential workers who do not have any other options for childcare and maintaining their ability to go to work is an important part of having capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Given there is now community transmission of COVID-19 in Ottawa, there is a risk that both symptomatic and asymptomatic transmission may occur. While measures to attempt to control these risks may be implemented in a childcare centre, it is important that parents and staff are made aware of – and understand - the risks. Please see Notice of Risk below:

Notice of Risk

When children from multiple families attend a single childcare centre, there is an increased risk of the COVID-19 virus coming into the centre. Children who are infected with the COVID-19 virus are more likely than adults to have very mild infections or to have no symptoms at all, but these children can still transmit the infection to other children and to adults in the centre. This means that children can bring home an infection acquired in the centre. This childcare centre has a screening process to help detect infections when there are symptoms; however, this screening process will not detect infected children or adults who do not have symptoms.

The risk of serious COVID-19 infection increases with age, which older childcare providers should consider, particularly if working in childcare centres with children from multiple families.

OPH recommends all Emergency Childcare Centres that will support the families of essential workers must have the following measures in place to avoid the spread of COVID-19 to multiple persons and families:

Active Screening of Children and Staff

- Active screening is required for anyone entering the childcare centre. At this time, it is recommended that only staff and children enter the centre and that all others, such as parents/guardians of children and delivery persons, be met at the door.
- Active screening is the process of proactively checking for symptoms (i.e., temperature checks), travel history and contact (without appropriate Personal Protective Equipment) of a person(s) who may have COVID-19.
- When providing active screening, keep a distance of 2 metres (six feet) from the person(s) you are screening.
- Only allow one point of entry and exit.
• Anyone who fits the criteria below will **not be allowed** into the childcare centre and will need to self-isolate for a period of 14 days:
  o If you or your child(ren) have any symptoms such as a fever and/or cough or difficulty breathing
  o If you or your child(ren) have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days (including the United States of America)
  o If you or your child(ren) live with, provided care for (without appropriate Personal Protective Equipment), or spent extensive time with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19, suspected to have COVID-19 or who has a fever, cough or shortness of breath that started within 14 days of travel outside of Canada (including the United States of America)

• Symptoms being actively screened for COVID-19 include:
  o Fever
  o Cough
  o Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
  o Other upper respiratory tract infection symptoms such as: nasal congestion, nasal discharge, sneezing and sore throat

• To support thorough active screening, childcare centres are asked to consider regular temperature checks and monitoring of all children and staff.
  o Specifically, childcare centres are to assess the temperature of all children/staff twice a day and maintain a log of all testing and results.
  o As per the Provincial guidelines:
    ▪ Clearly communicate to parents/guardians to check their children’s temperature and ask staff to check their own temperature daily before coming to the childcare setting.
    ▪ If the temperature is equal or greater than 38 degrees Celsius or if the child/children have any cold-like symptoms or vomiting and/or diarrhea, they should stay home.
  o Ensure that the thermometer has been disinfected, and gloves are worn. Staff must complete hand hygiene (hand washing or hand sanitizing), then put on gloves and a mask.
  o To maintain a 2 metre distance from others, have two staff complete the screening: one to take the temperature and the other to document.
  o Take temperature, partner will record, remove gloves, and complete hand hygiene (hand washing or hand sanitizer). Disinfect thermometer and wait appropriate contact time.

**Staffing**

• Provide services according to provincial guidelines, up to a staffing ratio of 1:5 per room, as is feasible.
• Cohort staff and children, as much as possible (i.e. try to keep the same staff working with the same children to minimize exposure(s)).
• Everyone should practice physical distancing when not at work. For more details, visit [OPH’s physical distancing webpage](https://www.ophz健康).
• Routine COVID-19 prevention strategies should be observed, refer to staff guidelines for more details.

Consent
• OPH recommends that those who enroll their children in the emergency childcare centre should be actively informed (e.g. through sign-off of a consent form) of the possibility of exposure to COVID-19 in the centre. While most transmissions occur from people who have symptoms, there is the possibility of asymptomatic transmission, and individuals should be aware of this.
• **Communication Plans:** Childcare centres must have a communication plan or protocol in place in the event that a child, parent or staff member at the site is exposed to COVID-19.

When to Contact Ottawa Public Health
• If you are aware of positive COVID-19 lab confirmed case for a child, parents or staff at the childcare centre.
• If one child or one staff has respiratory symptoms. Please be aware that the first symptom of a COVID-19 infection can be gastrointestinal, including diarrhea.
• Testing recommendations re: COVID-19 are provided to staff or children: Given that Ottawa has established community transmission, if symptomatic with respiratory symptoms, COVID-19 testing is recommended in children and adults.
• It is important to recognize that the COVID-19 situation is evolving very quickly. Please refer to OttawaPublicHealth.ca/Coronavirus for the latest information.

Cleaning & Disinfecting
OPH recommends the following enhanced cleaning practices to support infection prevention and control:
• Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces at least twice a day, using an enhanced cleaner/disinfectant used for outbreaks
• Remove sensory play (e.g. water or sand activities, use of play-dough)
• Remove shared items such as toys that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected
• Reduce clutter and limit toys to those that can be disinfected daily
• Enhance hand hygiene practices for both staff and children

Physical Distancing Strategies within the Childcare Centre
• Spreading children out into different areas;
• Staggering, or alternating, lunchtime and outdoor playtime;
• Incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children;
• Extend outdoor play as much as possible as this will limit close contacts and close playground equipment.
• Increasing the distance between nap mats. If space is tight, place children head-to-toe or toe-to-toe.
Management of Children with Possible COVID-19
If a child begins to experience any symptoms while in care, it is recommended that:

- Symptomatic children are immediately separated from others in a supervised area until they can go home. Environmental cleaning of the space the child was separated should be conducted once the child has been picked up.
- If COVID-19 is suspected in a child or adult and the person is getting tested, the daycare must close while awaiting test result.
- Re-opening will depend on the outcome of the test result:
  - if the results are negative, you can open right away
  - if the results are positive, the centre must remain closed and all persons must self-isolate for 14 days from the initial point of contact.
  - OPH would be involved since suspect COVID-19 is reportable.
  - All opening and or closure of centre’s would be in consultation with OPH.

- Any child/staff who has any symptoms of illness OR whose parent or other household members are showing any symptoms of illness as described above, will be asked to stay home from the childcare centre and self-isolate:
  - for 14 days from the first day of symptoms
  - OR
  - until 24 hours AFTER symptoms have FULLY resolved, whichever is the longer time frame.

Supporting Each Other and Our Community
We understand that these enhanced measures place an additional burden on childcare centres and staff; however, measures like this are needed to ensure that the spread of COVID-19 in our community is limited. We appreciate all the efforts to ensure that the employees who are providing emergency care are protected as much as possible. We thank you for the service that you provide to our community.

For information and current situation, please visit the Ottawa Public Health Novel Coronavirus Main Page or Ottawa Public Health Professional Page.