

MCF ChildcareBC Engagement MCF:EX <ChildcareBC.Engagement@gov.bc.ca>

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(7 days ago)

Dear child care providers,

Thank you for everything you do for families, communities and the economy. We appreciate your hard work and tireless commitment throughout the pandemic – you are making a huge difference every day.

As you may know, the Province provided an update today on the plans for the safe return to school for B.C. students next week. Together with Minister Chen, we continue to work with our provincial health partners to ensure child care operators have the information they need to operate safely.

Most recently, the Provincial Health Office reviewed the child care guidance in late December and it is posted here: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/child-care>.

As such, child care continues to operate safely by following public health principles like staying home when sick, encouraging physical distancing and minimizing physical contact, practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, along with frequent cleaning and disinfecting. Child care providers are reminded that the vaccination of child care workers is the best defense against the spread of COVID 19.

As the pandemic landscape in B.C. evolves, the guidance for child care will continue to be reviewed to ensure that child care providers both on and off school grounds have up-to-date guidance to keep their centres safe for staff and children.

We have received questions from providers - we have included responses to the most frequently asked below and we'll add more in future communications as they arise.

Child care centres should continue to use the posted guidance and develop or adapt alternate staff plans should they face staff shortages to ensure they can remain open safely while following regulations.

We thank you for your patience and hard work during what continues to be a challenging time for your centres and the families you serve.

Sincerely,

Shannon Renault
Executive Director
Stakeholder Engagement and Divisional Services
Child Care Division

1.What measures are in place for kids in child care?

The public health child care guidance was recently reviewed and reposted in December. <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/child-care>

The guidelines are to:

- Get vaccinated if you are five years old or older

- Do a daily health check
- Stay home when sick
- Practice personal measures
- Wear masks when recommended

If you are sick or have symptoms of illness, you should **stay home** even if you are fully vaccinated. Use the [BCCDC testing guidance](#) to find out whether a test is recommended based on your/your child's symptoms. If you've tested positive, learn more: [Tested-positive-COVID19.pdf \(bccdc.ca\)](#)

2. Will there be enhanced measures for childcare centres?

- All decisions related to child care and COVID health and safety measures are made through the Provincial Health Office (PHO) and the BCCDC, and as soon as any guidance changes, we will update you.
- The Provincial Health Office and BCCDC reviewed the guidance for child care centres at the end of December. However, as the pandemic landscape in B.C. evolves, the guidance for child care will be regularly reviewed. It is available on the BCCDC website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/child-care>
- Child care, schools and camps can be operated safely by following public health principles like staying home when sick, encouraging physical distancing and minimizing physical contact, practicing hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette and frequent cleaning and disinfecting.

3. How should child care providers handle staff shortages?

- Child care centres should continue to use the posted guidance and develop or adapt alternate staff plans should they face staff shortages to ensure they can remain open safely while following regulations.
- We thank you for your patience and hard work during what continues to be a challenging time and ever-changing situation for your centres and the families you serve.
- All of our provincial programs and supports through our ChildcareBC plan will continue as we monitor the situation closely.

4. What is the direction for mask use?

- At the end of December, the Provincial Health Office and BCCDC reviewed the guidance for child care centres.
- However, as the pandemic landscape in B.C. evolves, the guidance for child care will be regularly reviewed.
- It is available on the BCCDC website: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-info/diseases-conditions/covid-19/childcare-schools/child-care>
- School-aged children in indoor child care settings – both on and off school grounds – are required to wear masks.
- This also applies to adults working at child care centres, including after-hours custodial staff, and visitors to these centres.

The safety measures for the new variant are the same.

Mask wearing for adults

All adults in child care settings should wear a mask at all times while indoors, except when:

- they are unable to because of health or behavioural reasons
- the mask is removed to identify the person
- they are engaged in an educational activity that can't be performed while wearing a mask. For example, playing a wind instrument
- they are eating or drinking
- they are behind a barrier like plexiglass, or in a room by themselves
- they are providing a service where visual cues, facial expressions or lip-reading are important

Mask wearing for children

- In family child care settings, children may wear a mask based on personal or family choice.
- In non-family child care settings and for programs in K-12 school settings, school-age children should wear a mask at all times while indoors, except for the reasons listed above.
- Younger (non school-age children) in non-family child care settings may wear a mask based on personal or family choice.
- Infants under 2 years of age should not wear a mask.

5. Is there funding available to assist child care operators to ensure their Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) systems are working properly? What about other health and safety supplies?

- Yes. Eligible licensed child care providers can apply to the [Childcare BC Maintenance Fund](#) for funding to help address necessary repairs or to replace items due to [emergency circumstances](#) that directly impact children's health and safety and/or may result in immediate facility closure.
- The eligible items include HVAC systems.
- The facility would be responsible for routine maintenance of HVAC systems.
- The Child Care Health and Safety Grants were one-time payments to help Child Care Operating Funding (CCOF) and Universal Child Care Prototype Site providers offset the additional costs associated with operating safely during the COVID-19 pandemic to purchase items, such as masks, gloves and cleaning supplies.