

Enhanced Health and Safety Policy and Procedure

This policy was informed by recommendations from Public Health Ontario, the Ministry of Health, Government of Canada.

Purpose

An outbreak of an infectious disease can have severe consequences on human health and economic wellbeing. High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. is committed to advance planning and preparedness that are critical in mitigating the impact of a pandemic or declaration of a public health emergency on the company and our employees. This policy outlines the specific measures that will be taken by High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre, Inc. to ensure full safety of our employees, children and their families.

Scope

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, this policy governs the measures to be taken both by High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. and by its employees. This policy works in conjunction with all High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. policies, and the guidelines set out by Public Health Ontario and the Ministry of Health, Government of Canada.

Screening for Symptoms

- All individuals including children attending child care, staff and child care providers, parents/guardians, and visitors must be screened each day before entering the child care setting.
- Daily screening will be done electronically prior to entrance into the child care setting. Temperature checks will be part of screening.
- Parents and guardians will be reminded of this requirement when children are first registered for the program and through visible signage at the entrances and drop-off areas.
- When children are screened at the child care setting, screening staff will take appropriate precautions when screening and escorting children to the program, including maintaining a distance of at least 2 meters (6 feet) from those being screened, or being separated by a physical barrier (such as a plexiglass barrier), and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) (i.e., surgical/procedure mask and eye protection (goggles or face shield)).
- Staff will continue to follow advice from your local public health office regarding precautions to have in place.
- Alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol content will be placed at all screening stations. Dispensers will not be in locations that can be accessed by young children.

- All child care licensees will maintain daily records of screening results.
- Records will be kept on the premises (centre or home).

Daily Attendance Records

- Staff will maintain daily records of anyone entering the child care facility and the approximate length of their stay.
- Records will be kept on the childcare premises.
- Records (e.g. name, contact information, time of arrival/departure, screening completion/result, etc.) will be kept up-to-date and available to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.

Cohorts and Staffing

Cohorts

For the purposes of this document, a cohort is defined as a group of children and the staff members assigned to them, who stay together throughout the duration of the program for minimum 7 days.

As of August 3, 2020, cohort size for each room in a child care centre (including each family age group) will be the maximum group size as set out under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014* (CCEYA), as of September 1, 2020 (see section: Maximum Group Size and Ratio). Staff and students are not included in the maximum group size, but will be assigned to a specific group where possible.

Children will be permitted to attend on a part-time basis (e.g., half days, only Mondays and Wednesdays). Children attending on a full-time basis will be included in one group and will not mix with other groups.

Each cohort will stay together throughout the day and will not be permitted to mix with other cohorts.

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centres Inc. will maintain ratios set out under the CCEYA.

Staffing

- Staff will work at only one location.
- Supervisors and/or teachers and/or assistant teachers will limit their movement between rooms, doing so when absolutely necessary.
- Supply/replacement staff will be assigned to a specific cohort so as to limit staff interaction with multiple cohorts.

Qualified Staff

High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will ensure that each group has the required number of qualified staff as set out in the CCEYA.

- Supply/replacement staff will be assigned to a specific cohort so as to limit staff interaction with multiple cohorts.
- Staff will have certification in Standard First Aid Training, including Infant and Child CPR.
- Staff that are included in ratios will have valid certification in first aid training including infant and child CPR, unless exempted under the CCEYA or the certification has been extended by the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB).
- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will obtain Vulnerable Sector Checks (VSCs) from staff and other persons who are interacting with children at the childcare premises.

Staff Training

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will ensure that training is aligned with local public health unit direction and is provided to all child care staff/providers on the health and safety and other operational measures as outlined in this document, plus any additional local requirements in place as close to re-opening as possible.
- New training will be offered at least once and more as needed.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Practices

- Frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day as they are most likely to become contaminated (for example, toys, play materials, doorknobs, water fountain knobs, light switches, toilet and faucet handles, electronic devices, and tabletops).
- Staff will refer to Public Health Ontario's Environmental Cleaning fact sheet and the Public Services Health and Safety Association's Child Care Centre Employer Guideline for information on cleaning.
- Staff will keep a cleaning and disinfecting log to track and demonstrate cleaning schedules.
- Only one cohort will access the washroom at a time and staff will be recommended to clean the facilities in between each use, particularly if different cohorts will be using the same washroom.

Equipment and Toy Usage and Restrictions

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will provide toys and equipment which are made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected (e.g., avoid plush toys).

- Toys and equipment will be cleaned and disinfected at a minimum between cohorts.
- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will have designated toys and equipment (e.g., balls, loose equipment) for each room or cohort. Where toys and equipment are shared, they will be cleaned and disinfected prior to being shared.
- Play structures will only be used by one cohort at a time. High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will consult with the local public health unit regarding the use of playground equipment onsite.

Parent Drop Off and Pick Up Procedures

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will develop procedures that support physical distancing and separate groups as best as possible (i.e., children of one room will enter door A and children of another room will enter door B, with staggered entrance times).
- As much as possible, parents will not go past the screening area.
- All entrances will have hand sanitizer and if in an enclosed space and physical distance of 2 meters cannot be maintained, parents/guardians and staff/providers will be recommended to use face coverings.
- Signage/markings on the ground will be made to direct families through the entry steps.
- Personal belongings (e.g., backpack, clothing, etc.) will be recommended to be minimized. If brought, belongings will be labeled and kept in the child's cubby/ designated area.

Visitor Restriction

- Non-essential visitors will not be permitted to enter the program.
- Students completing post-secondary educational placements will be permitted to enter the childcare settings and will only attend one child care setting and assigned to one group of children.
- Students will also be subject to the same health and safety protocols as other staff members, such as screening, and the use of PPE when on the childcare premises, and will also review health and safety protocols.
- Use of video and telephone interviews will be used to interact with families where possible, rather than in person.
- Ministry staff and other public officials (e.g. fire marshal, public health inspectors) will be permitted to enter and inspect the premises at any reasonable time.
- As much as possible, parents should not go past the screening area.
- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will ensure that there are no volunteers at the program.

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- All staff will perform and promote frequent, proper hand hygiene (including supervising or assisting children with hand hygiene).

- Hand washing using soap and water will be recommended over alcohol-based hand rub for children.
- Staff will frequently refer to Public Health Ontario's How to Wash Your Hands fact sheet when engaging in hand hygiene.
- All staff will perform and promote frequent, proper respiratory etiquette (including supervising or assisting children with respiratory etiquette).

Physical Distancing

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. recognizes that physical distancing between children in a child care setting is difficult and encourages child care staff and providers to maintain a welcoming and caring environment for children.
- Each cohort will have their own assigned indoor space, separated from all other cohorts by a physical barrier. The purpose of the barrier is to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets that are thought to transmit COVID-19 and to reinforce physical distancing requirements between cohorts. The physical barrier will begin at the floor and reach a minimum height of 8 feet to ensure that it will always be 12 inches taller than the tallest person in the facility. It will be as wide as the space/room will allow.
- When in the same common space (e.g., entrances, hallways) physical distancing of at least 2 metres will be maintained between different cohorts and will be encouraged, where possible, between children within the same cohort by:
 - spreading children out into different areas, particularly at meal and dressing time;
 - incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children; and
 - using visual cues to promote physical distancing.
- In shared outdoor space, cohorts will maintain a distance of at least 2 metres between groups and any other individuals outside of the cohort.
- Shared spaces and structures that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between cohorts will not be used.
- Recognizing that physical distancing is difficult with small children, additional measures to be taken include:
 - planning activities that do not involve shared objects or toys;
 - when possible, moving activities outside to allow for more space; and
 - avoiding singing activities indoors.

Interactions with Children

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Staff will continue to foster safe, inclusive and caring learning environments for all children while following the COVID-19 safety guidelines and maintaining physical distancing.
- Recognizing that physical distancing is difficult with small children, measures to support physical distancing include:

- planning activities that do not involve shared objects or toys; and,
- when possible, moving activities outside to allow for more space.
- Children will not be permitted to share food, eating utensils, bottles, sippy cups, etc. These items will be labeled with the child's name to discourage accidental sharing.

Use of Personal Protection Equipment

High Birch Childcare & Learning Centres Inc. will follow local public health guidelines regarding the use of masks and personal protective equipment. High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will secure and sustain an amount of PPE and cleaning supplies that can support current and ongoing operations.

- Ontario Public Health posters outlining the proper wear and removal of PPE will be posted for staff reference.
- When wearing a mask, staff will wash hands before donning the mask and before and after removing the mask. Staff will refer to [Public Health Ontario resources](#) for how to properly wear and take off masks, eye protection and all PPE gear.
- All children in grade 4 and above will be required to wear a non-medical or cloth mask, and all school-aged children are encouraged but not required to wear a mask.

PPE will be used:

- in the screening area and when accompanying children into the program from the screening area;
- when cleaning and disinfecting blood or bodily fluid spills if there is a risk of splashing. Staff will refer to the [Public Services Health and Safety Association's Child Care Centre Employer Guideline](#) for more information on working safely in a child care setting and;
- when caring for a sick child or a child showing symptoms of illness.

Food Safety Requirements

High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will change meal practices to ensure there is no self-serve or sharing of food at meal times.

- Utensils will be used to serve food.
- Meals will be served in individual portions to the children.
- There will be no items shared (i.e., serving spoon or salt shaker).
- There will be no food provided by the family/outside of the regular meal provision of the program (except where required and special precautions for handling and serving the food will be put in place).
- Children will neither prepare nor provide food that will be shared with others.

- Staff will ensure proper hand hygiene is practiced when preparing food and for all individuals before and after eating.
- Where possible, children will practice physical distancing while eating.
- There will be no sharing of utensils.

Communication With Parents/Guardians, Staff

High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will initiate and maintain on-going and responsive communication with parents/guardians and staff regarding enhanced health and safety practices and COVID-19 via telephone and email as much as possible in order to limit in person meetings.

Rescheduling/Cancellation of Pre-Planned Group Events & In-Person Meetings

High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will ensure the rescheduling and cancellation of pre-planned group events. All meeting will be conducted via telephone or using a virtual platform.

COVID-19 Response Plan

Management of Cases and COVID-19 Outbreaks

- A single, symptomatic, laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19 in a staff member or child will be considered a confirmed COVID-19 outbreak, in consultation with the local public health unit. Outbreaks will be declared in collaboration between the program and the local public health unit to ensure an outbreak number is provided.
- Staff, parents/guardians, and children who are symptomatic or have been advised to self-isolate by the local public health unit, must not attend the program. Asymptomatic individuals awaiting results may not need to be excluded and should follow the advice of public health.

Symptoms that will be looked for include but are not limited to: fever, cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, runny nose, nasal congestion, headache, and a general feeling of being unwell.

Children will be monitored for atypical symptoms and signs of COVID-19, along with symptoms outlined in the 'COVID-19 Reference Document for Symptoms' on the Ministry of Health's COVID-19 website.

Isolation and Exclusion of Symptomatic Children and Staff

- If a child or staff becomes sick while in the program, they will be isolated and family members contacted for pick-up.
- If a separate room is not available, the sick person will be kept at a minimum of 2 meters from others.
- The sick person will be provided with tissues and reminded of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette, and proper disposal of tissues.
- If the sick person is a child, staff will remain with the child until a parent/guardian arrives. If tolerated and above the age of 2, the child will be encouraged to wear a surgical/procedure mask. Staff will wear a surgical/procedure mask and eye protection at all times and not interact with others. The staff will also avoid contact with the child's respiratory secretions.
- All items used by the sick person will be cleaned and disinfected. All items that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, cardboard puzzles) will be removed and stored in a sealed container for a minimum of 7 days.

Reporting Illness, Cases and Outbreaks to York Region Public Health

- Public health will be notified, and their advice will be followed.
- Supervisors will follow public health advice on notifying others using the space of the suspected illness.
- Other children, including siblings of the sick child, and staff in the program who were present while the child or staff member became ill will be identified as a close contact and further cohorted (i.e., grouped together). The local public health unit will provide any further direction on testing and isolation of these close contacts.

Serious Occurrence Reporting

- High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will report suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 as required by the Health Protection and Promotion Act.
- The local public health unit will be notified to report a child suspected to have COVID-19 and will follow advice provided by the public health unit in order to implement control measures to prevent the potential spread and how to monitor for other possible infected staff members and children.
- Where a child or staff is suspected of having or has a confirmed case of COVID-19, High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will report this to the ministry as a serious occurrence.
- Where a room, centre, or premises closes due to COVID-19, High Birch Childcare & Learning Centre Inc. will report this to the ministry as a serious occurrence.
- A notification form indicating a serious occurrence will be posted as required under the CCEYA, unless the local public health unit advises otherwise.

