

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES CIRCULAR

Date: September 2, 2021

CIRCULAR NUMBER: COVID-19 2021-44r *Revised information is in bold*

To: All Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) facilities

Subject: Upcoming Changes to Public Health Recommendations for ELCC

Type: For information only

Effective Date: September 7, 2021

With the return to school approaching, the Department of Education has released guidance aimed at minimizing the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The ELCC Program has worked with public health officials, and in coordination with the Department of Education, to update recommendations for the ELCC sector.

An updated COVID-19 ELCC Practice Guide was distributed in June 2021 and is currently being revised to reflect public health recommendations for Fall 2021. **While it was anticipated that the guide would be distributed to facilities in mid-August, further revisions are needed to reflect the public health order that came into effect on August 28, 2021. The updated guide is now expected to be released in early September.** Changes will come into effect on September 7, 2021, to align with the first day of school.

This circular has been issued in order to help facilities begin to prepare for the updated public health guidance. Revisions to the guide will include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Cohort sizes will increase from 30 to 48 children not including staff.
 - It is important to note that increased cohort sizes may lead to more children and staff being identified as close contacts and required to self-isolate if there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case within the cohort.
- Physical distancing will no longer be required within cohorts, but is still **strongly** recommended between cohorts and/or individual groups/playrooms.
- **Inside the ELCC facility, the use of non-medical masks will now be required for all children enrolled in kindergarten and in higher grades**
 - **Mask breaks for children can occur when 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from other children and staff can be reliably maintained.**

- **Children and staff/home providers are required to wear masks during vehicular transportation provided by the facility. Currently, children are also required to wear a mask when being transported on a school bus.**
- **Masks can be removed when outside; however, if the children are involved in activities where they are in close proximity to each other, the facility may choose to require the use of masks.**
- **As per circular [2021-46 - Immunization and Testing Requirements](#), all staff and practicum students working in licensed ELCC facilities are required to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 by no later than October 31, 2021 or submit to regular testing. This requirement also applies to individuals or organizations providing services on behalf of a licensed child care facility who are paid or unpaid.**
 - **It is important to note that to be fully immunized by October 31, the first dose of COVID-19 vaccine needs to be received by September 7, and the second dose of COVID-19 vaccine needs to be received by October 17, 2021.**

The following requirements will **not** change:

- **Medical-grade masks must be worn continuously by staff in centres (including nursery schools) and home-based providers when inside the ELCC facility. Mask breaks may occur when 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from children and other staff can be reliably maintained.**
- **It is strongly recommended that staff/home providers wear medical-grade masks during outdoor play with children, particularly when unable to consistently and reliably maintain 2 metres/6 feet of physical distance from children and other staff.**
- **All visitors, including parents are required to wear a mask when inside the ELCC facility.**
- **Masks and personal protective equipment for staff and home providers will be provided to ELCC facilities by the Manitoba government.**

For the latest provincial public health information on COVID-19, visit: www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

ELCC providers are encouraged to check the Department of Families COVID-19 Notices and Circulars at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/covid-circulars.html> on a regular basis for specific ELCC sector updates. This is the same content as you will receive electronically from the ELCC Program.

We continue to appreciate the ongoing commitment of the ELCC sector to providing quality care, while also ensuring that precautions are taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We would like to extend our sincere thanks for your efforts throughout this difficult time.

If you have any questions, please email cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca or call 204-945-0776 or 1-888-213-4754.

Thank you,

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