

**Ministry of Education  
Early Years and Child Care Division**

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**Ministère de l'Éducation  
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**TO:** Child Care Licensees

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

**DATE:** April 7, 2021

**SUBJECT:** Ministry of Education Update: Province-Wide Stay-at-Home Order and Health and Safety Refresher

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Thank you for your ongoing efforts in keeping children, families, and child care staff safe during this challenging time. The role of Ontario's early years and child care sector is vital to supporting children and families as the COVID-19 pandemic evolves. The Ministry of Education is committed to keeping you informed of changes to measures Ontario is taking to protect public health and safety and the purpose of this communication is to inform you of the following new measures.

### **Province Wide Stay-at-Home Order**

On April 7, 2021, the government announced a province-wide Stay-at-Home order starting April 8<sup>th</sup> for at least four weeks until May 6<sup>th</sup> in response to worsening trends in key community health indicators across the province. As outlined by the Chief Medical Officer of Health, implementing a provincewide shutdown is needed to bring the third wave of this pandemic under control so that we can save lives and allow our vaccination program to take hold.

During this period, the government is permitting child care to remain open as a continued support for children and families. The upcoming April break will continue as scheduled. We are directing schools to continue to provide access to their on-site child care centres for those programs permitted to operate over the spring break.

There are no changes with regard to the operation of licensed child care. Licensed child care centres (including licensed before and after school programs) and licensed home child care remain open and are asked to continue to adhere to the enhanced public health and safety requirements. During the April break week (April 12-16), child care providers that are licensed to serve school-aged children for a full-day of programming are permitted to do so.

In some areas of the province, where local public health units have directed schools in their region to pivot to remote learning, child care providers should contact their CMSM/DSSAB or local public health unit to determine if there are implications for child care.

### **Asymptomatic Testing Expansion**

For the week of April 12-18, pharmacies that currently offer testing and assessment centres across the province will accept appointments for asymptomatic testing for children attending child care and child care staff/providers. The Ministry of Education will be working with school boards to offer school-based clinics. Parents are encouraged to take advantage of this testing capacity to have their children tested to support a safe return to school on April 19<sup>th</sup> and continued safe operation of child care.

### **Health and Safety Refresher**

Within the context of the province-wide Stay-at-Home order and the continued importance of ensuring public health and safety in the delivery of child care programs over this period, continued adherence to public health and safety protocols is of the utmost importance. These actions keep children, families and staff safe and are vital to limiting the spread of COVID-19 cases in our communities.

As previously communicated, the latest [\*Operational Guidance for Child Care During COVID-19 Outbreak\*](#) has been made available online.

As well, the *Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak – For First Nations Child Care Programs* was circulated to communities on March 11, 2021.

The [\*COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool\*](#) is also available to assist you and families with symptom screening.

We have also attached a template letter that you may send to families to reinforce the importance of adhering to public health and safety protocols, promote best practices for a safe April break, and encourage parents to have their children tested to ensure a safe return to school on April 19<sup>th</sup> and continued safe operation of child care.

The health, safety, and well-being of children, families and child care and early years providers is the ministry's top priority. Health and safety training, adherence to protocols, and consistent screening, mask use and distancing have been key factors contributing to the safe environments fostered within child care settings and their ability to remain open to serve families.

We recognize your continued dedication and commitment to maintaining the health and safety of your staff and the children and families you serve. Thank you for your efforts, and those of Registered Early Childhood Educators (RECEs) and other members of your team, and continued vigilance and discipline with helping to support children and

families in this province by ensuring access to high quality, safe and nurturing environments for our children.

Sincerely,

Phil Graham