

ELM Children's Centre Pandemic Policy

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Approved by: ELM Children's Centre Supervisor and Board of Directors

Intent:

Pandemic is distinguished as an infectious disease/illness that becomes a worldwide epidemic that spreads easily and rapidly through many countries and regions of the world affecting a large percentage of the population. A pandemic occurs when an infectious disease emerges to which the population has little or no immunity. It may spread easily from person to person and may cause serious illness and death.

Pandemics are unpredictable and can affect any age group with the severity affecting individuals differently. During a pandemic, infectious diseases or illnesses can be prevented through appropriate hygiene, sanitation and infection prevention/control practices. Provisions of daily health screenings for children/staff and families and heightened disinfecting are put in place to protect the health, safety and well-being of children, staff and families.

Pandemic Policy objectives are to:

- Ensure all staff are educated about pandemic risk factors and prevention procedures.
- Control infection risks through the application of preventative measures.
- Integrate pandemic prevention strategies in day-to-day operation.
- Ensure staff recognize that the educational information provided is to be utilized in the workplace to protect themselves, the children and the families.
- During a pandemic, these policies take precedence over previous policies and must be followed.

Policy

All staff at ELM Children`s Centre must adhere strictly to the guidelines and practices below in order to reduce the risk of contracting or transmitting an infectious disease or illness during a pandemic.

Staff must also familiarize themselves with the recommendations of the Public Health Unit in the Health and Safety Manual for childcare providers.

The pandemic policy and procedures are required to be reviewed with employees before they begin their employment, signed and dated. Children`s services teams are required to follow Public Health Officer of Health direction and protocols.

Pandemic Procedure

The Supervisor will advise staff and ensure they use the guidelines in the above noted policy.

Staff will make themselves aware of the pandemic by:

- Reading the centre communication logbook daily
- Reading Middlesex County emails regarding pandemic information
- Reading all pandemic guidelines and expectations set by Middlesex county
- Reading all meeting minutes; in particular, Health and Safety, and staff meeting minutes.
- Partaking in any required training to maintain current information on health and safety related to the pandemic

Staff Health Screening:

- Staff will be screened daily either at home or upon arrival at the childcare centre with questions related to the pandemic.
- Once staff has passed the screening procedure, they will sanitize their hands upon entry and then wash hands upon entry to program.
- If staff fail the screening they will be required to stay home.
- Staff will be unable to return to work until they are symptom free for 24 hours or have been advised by a physician or public health that they may return to work. There may be specific direction from the Public Health Unit

regarding timelines for return to work. (i.e. COVID-19, 14-day isolation if symptoms develop).

Staff Responsibility during Family Health Screening:

- Staff will sanitize their hands between each individual screened.
- If temperatures are taken, staff will disinfect the thermometer between uses.
- Staff will clean and disinfect doorknobs and any area touched by a parent or child during the screening process before screening the next family (i.e. pens, table, computer, etc.)
- Staff will use personal protective equipment provided as required by Public Health direction. (i.e. masks, gloves, eye protection, etc.)
- Staff will receive children from parent and bring them to playrooms whenever possible. If children can enter program outside, this is preferred. Having no parents enter the centre is also preferred.
- At pick up time parents or pick up designate will not go past the screening area or will remain outside and a staff member will bring their child out to them. Parents are asked to wear a mask and any messages are also relayed at this time.

Children and Families Health Screening:

- All family members will be screened, as recommended by the health unit using the screening tool provided for the specific pandemic, either prior to arrival or upon arrival at the childcare centre.
- When possible, we request that only one parent drop off children to assist with quicker screening wait times and to avoid increased exposure.
- Families will be required to physically distance themselves from other families while waiting to be admitted to the centre.
- Before entry into the program, the screening process will be completed on the child. If any symptoms are noted the child will not be permitted to attend the childcare centre that day and must follow the screening tool provided for instructions on next steps.

- The child will remain away from the childcare centre until they are symptom free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication. There may be specific direction from Public Health regarding timelines for return (i.e. COVID-19 14-day self isolation if symptoms develop)
- Families that are not permitted entry could be directed to contact Public Health 519-663-5317 (ask for a member of the Outbreak & Facility COVID Team) their family physician or Telehealth Ontario at 1-866-797-0000 for direction during the pandemic.
- If the health screening is passed, parents and children over the age of 2 will be required to use hand sanitizer upon entry to the childcare centre or as directed by manufacturer. It is preferred parents do not enter the building if possible and a staff member takes the child inside and to their classroom.
- Children will be required to wash their hands before entry into the classroom.
- If a child develops symptoms after they are accepted into the centre they will be isolated under the supervision of an RECE or staff member. The child's parent or emergency contact person will be contacted for immediate pick-up. Any siblings of that child that also attend the childcare facility will also need to go home.

Management of Children with Possible Illness/Symptoms (COVID-19)

If a child begins to experience symptoms of illness (COVID-19) while attending childcare, it is recommended that:

- Symptomatic children are immediately separated from others in a supervised area until they can go home.
- In addition, where possible, anyone who is providing care to the child should maintain 2 metres.
- If 2 metre distance cannot be maintained, advice from the local health unit will be necessary to prevent/limit virus transmission to those providing care.
- Contact the public health unit to notify them of a potential case (if advised to do so) and seek input regarding the information that should be shared with the other parents of children in the childcare centre.
- While contacting the public health unit, at a minimum the child and childcare worker should wear a surgical/procedure mask if tolerated.

- Hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be practiced while child is waiting to be picked up.
- Tissues should be provided to the child for proper respiratory etiquette, with proper disposal of the tissues and proper hand hygiene.
- A thorough cleaning of the space the child was separated in should be conducted once the child has been picked up.
- Children with symptoms must follow the instructions on the screening tool provided as to their next steps.
- If tested and it comes back negative, the individual may return 24 hours after symptoms have subsided.
- If test comes back positive, the individual must be excluded for 14 days (COVID-19) after the onset of symptoms and once the public health unit has recommended, they may return.
- Other children and staff in the centre who were present while a child or staff member became ill should be identified as a close contact and grouped together until further direction from public health on testing and isolation. In the event it is a positive test result, follow guidelines recommended by local health unit.
- A serious occurrence report will need to be completed following direction of ministry of education reporting protocols.
- All attendance/screening records will be kept in their respective folders in the office if needed for contact tracing. Screening records are done on a weekly basis with children, staff and visitors all on separate sheets. These records will be kept for one year of the last dated record. All visitors contact info and length of stay will also be recorded and noted in the daily log. Attendance records and staff time sheets will indicate length of time at centre for each child or staff.

Reducing Risk of Spreading the Illness

- Cover your nose and mouth when you cough or sneeze by using a tissue or coughing into your sleeve or elbow; dispose of the tissue immediately into a garbage can and wash your hands.

- Teach and encourage the children to cover their coughs and sneezes by coughing into their sleeve or elbow when developmentally appropriate and wash their hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water, especially after you cough or sneeze and assist children with doing the same.
- When soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 70% alcohol is required by Public Health.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth to prevent spreading of germs.
- Social/physical distancing yourself when possible to prevent the spread of illness. Distancing yourself 2 meters from other individuals is required wherever reasonably possible.
- Wear PPE as recommended by Public Health Unit. If staff are unable to wear certain PPE due to certain medical conditions, they should do their best to follow all other precautions and if possible be placed into a position with no contact with others. The only time PPE is not required is when 2 metre distance can be maintained.
- If you become ill, you will be required to stay home until you are symptom free for 24 hours. If symptoms worsen, contact a physician or public health or Telehealth Ontario for direction during the pandemic. There may be specific direction from Public Health regarding timelines for return to work (i.e. COVID-19 14-day isolation if symptoms develop).
- Limit contact with others during this time as a preventative measure. We will ensure this is done by keeping staff with one age group only as much as possible, holding zoom meetings rather than in person meetings, or physically distanced Limit meetings when needed and doing virtual tours for parents interested in enrolling their children.
- Visitors should be limited during a pandemic. If they need to enter the child care centre they will need to pass screening.

Pandemic Heightened Handwashing, Hand Sanitizer and Disposable Glove Use

Staff will implement strict heightened hand washing practices after all activities for themselves and the children. Alcohol based hand rub may be used when hand soap is not readily available. Hand washing with soap and water should be the

first choice if available. Activities where hand washing should be implemented are included but not limited to those outlined below:

- Upon arrival at the childcare centre.
- After screening individuals upon entry into the centre.
- Before/after direct physical contact with parents/children.
- After each transition whenever possible.
- Before/after preparing, serving or eating food.
- Before/after staff break/lunch times.
- After diapering a child, cleaning up messes or wiping a nose.
- After helping a child in washroom or using the washroom yourself.
- After sneezing or coughing.
- After a child sneezes or coughs within proximity to you.
- After taking out garbage.
- Before/after giving any medications.
- Before/after applying sunscreen to each individual child.
- After contact with blood or bodily fluids.
- When hands are visibly soiled.
- After using protective gloves
- After completion of work shift to avoid taking virus home.
- If handling chemicals, wash hands before eating, drinking, smoking or using washroom.

Staff will use correct hand washing procedures as outlined below:

- Use a hand wash sink supplied with hot and cold running water, paper towels and liquid soap in a dispenser.
- Use soap and water for soiled hands.
- Wet hands under running water.
- Apply soap to palm of hand.
- Use friction to clean between fingers, palms, backs of hands, wrists, forearms, under nails and base of thumbs for approximately 20 seconds.
- Rinse under running water for a count of 5 seconds.
- Dry with a clean paper towel.

- Turn off taps with paper towel.
- Dispose of towel in garbage container.

Staff may use correct 70% alcohol-based hand rub procedures as below:

- Alcohol based hand rubs should only be used if your hands are not visibly soiled and if soap and water are not readily available.
- If possible, remove hand and wrist jewellery.
- Apply one or two pumps of hand rub onto one palm. Rub your hands together. Clean all surfaces of your hands, concentrating on fingertips, between fingers, nail beds, back of your hands and base of thumbs.
- Continue rubbing hands until product is dry; this will take a minimum of 20 seconds if sufficient product is used.
- If your hands look dirty and running water is not available, use a moistened towelette to remove dirt, followed using an alcohol-based hand rub.

NOTE: When soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand rubs are the preferred method for cleaning your hands, provided they contain alcohol concentrations of 60% or higher as recommended by Public Health.

NOTE: Disposable non latex gloves are to be used for infection control purposes. However, the use of disposable gloves does not replace the need for hand washing.

Disposable Glove Use

Staff will:

- Wash hands before/after glove use.
- Gloves are intended for single use only
- Store disposable non latex gloves in a cool, dry place.
- Use as recommended by the manufacturer.
- Remove after use and dispose in the regular garbage. (never reuse)
- Wash hands as indicated above after disposable gloves are removed.

NOTE: Remove gloves from wrist and peel inside out prior to disposal.

Pandemic Program Guidelines and Practices

1. Water Play and Sensory Play

- Group sensory play will be suspended until the end of the pandemic to prevent the spread of illness through these activities.

2. Lunch Time

- Children will not be permitted to self serve during pandemic.
- Staff will ensure tables have been cleaned and disinfected before/after eating.
- Staff will ensure all children/staff wash hands before/after eating.
- Children will be physically distanced when possible during lunchtime routines.
- No utensils will be shared.

3. Outdoor Equipment and Sandboxes

- Outdoor sand toys must be cleaned and disinfected after use during a pandemic outbreak.
- Bikes, riding toys and all outdoor equipment must be cleaned and disinfected before and after outdoor play.
- Any materials/toys that are mouthed by a child must be removed, cleaned and disinfected before being used again. (Recommended to have a bin to put soiled toys into until they can be disinfected).
- Remove all toys/items from play that can not be easily cleaned and disinfected (i.e. plush toys, books, cardboard puzzles, etc.)

4. Limit the amount of group activities as much as possible.

- Set up individual activities to encourage social distancing.
- Plan more outdoor activities.
- Avoid small group times such as stories or circles.

5. Waste disposal

- There should be an accessible garbage container in each room that is emptied regularly.
- Children should be reminded not to touch garbage containers.
- Keep all garbage containers away from food storage and food preparation areas.

- Remove garbage through playground door to be disposed of in large bins outside. **DO NOT GO THROUGH KITCHEN!**
- Thoroughly clean and sanitize garbage containers daily.

6. Daily Cleaning and Disinfecting of surfaces:

- Cleaning is the essential first step in minimizing the risk of spreading during a pandemic.
- Without cleaning, dirt or organic matter can interfere with the disinfectants ability to kill pathogens(germs) present on surfaces.
- If you are cleaning multiple surfaces, move from the least to most soiled areas to avoid risk of contamination.

Proper Cleaning Steps:

- Wash all surfaces with soap and water using friction to remove dirt or organics.
- Rinse with clean potable water.
- Air dry or use single use paper towels.

Disinfecting:

- A disinfectant is a chemical product used to reduce pathogens to a safe level.
- There are many different products available, including some disinfectants that function as a cleaner as well. Be sure to follow the directions on the label regarding contact time, expiration dates and proper use.
- There are also premixed or concentrated solutions.

Pre-Mixed Disinfectants:

- Some disinfectants can be purchased through a supplier in a formula that is pre-mixed to a desired concentration. These should be used as directed per manufacturers instructions.

Concentrated Disinfectants:

- These products are a concentrated formula, which you will need to mix with water to a designated ratio as indicated on the product label.
- If you are responsible for mixing and preparing the disinfectant solution, you need to use the corresponding test strips to verify that it contains the proper concentration. The correct concentration is important for proper disinfection. (1:50 bleach/water for disinfecting).

7. Disinfecting toys and equipment

- Toys/equipment and other high touch surfaces such as door handles, handrails in the child care centre will be disinfected at each site daily and a schedule will be developed for constant and enhanced cleaning and disinfecting by the supervisor in consultation with Public Health guidelines.
- Buckets/containers will be used in each area/room for toys that have been mouthed by children or are soiled. These toys will be cleaned and disinfected before being used again.

Pandemic Management

If a child becomes ill, isolate child/ren and arrange for immediate pick up.

Establish control measures per Public Health direction for each childcare centre:

- Exclude all ill children and staff from childcare centre as per Public Health directive.
- A Public Health Inspector may visit to ensure all infection prevention and control measures are being met.
- Please ensure that all staff has knowledge and are implementing the PHU recommendations.
- Review hand hygiene with staff. Increased hand washing is required during a pandemic. Children and staff must have access to warm running water, soap and single use paper towels.
- Families must clean their hands when they enter and leave the childcare centre with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

- Must not partake in social outings.
- Practice social/physical distancing whenever possible.
- Implement an enhanced cleaning and disinfecting program (at minimum twice daily or as needed) of high touch surfaces such as door handles, handrails, sinks/toilet handles, etc. (1:50 bleach/water for disinfecting, during pandemic and if a positive case is identified a 1:9 bleach/water solution will be used for deep cleaning). Cleaning and disinfecting should be documented.

Communication with Parents

- It is essential that parents be kept informed of the status of the pandemic. It is also important that they understand the policy surrounding exclusion and understand why ill children are not to be present in the childcare facility.
- A communication letter will be provided to families explaining these key points.
- If the centre develops a positive case or an outbreak the parents will be let know by email and all serious occurrence notification forms are posted on the bulletin board in the front entrance in the screening area for them to see.

Outside Services

- Essential delivery services will be required to complete a health screening before entering the childcare centre.
- If they are unable to enter due to screening results, the company will be contacted, and arrangements will be made for another delivery or an alternative to the delivery.
- If safe to do so, the product can be left outdoors and be brought into the childcare centre by a staff member being sure to follow all safety precautions. It is preferable that no outsiders enter the centre.

NOTE: Policies and Procedures are subject to review to be modified/revised when needed as pandemic evolves.

The Medical Officer of Health is the authority who deems when a pandemic has ended.