



January 18, 2022

Dear Parents,

Thank you for the continued cooperation and support you have shown as we have all worked to keep pace with the changing health and safety requirements that COVID-19 has made necessary.

Keeping our child care environments healthy and safe has always been a priority. In light of the recent spread of the Omicron variant, we are pleased to share some updated measures initiated by our government.

The return of in-person learning - Schools have commenced in-person learning, with enhanced health & safety measures. Family Day's before and after school and extended day programs have also reopened, with the addition of new safety measures including:

- an additional supply of rapid antigen tests for schools
- establishing in-school vaccination clinics
- asking children, parents and staff to screen and monitor symptoms, including self-screening;
- supplying non-fit-tested N95 masks for use by child care staff
- additional supply of high-quality, three-ply cloth masks (free of charge and strongly encouraged) for children

Public Health representatives continue to state that vaccination continues to be the most effective way to protect children, families and communities during the rapid spread of the Omicron variant. Work is underway to support enhanced, ongoing access to vaccination for everyone.

Reporting - The Ministry of Health has stopped routine notification to families in schools and child care and public reporting of COVID-19 cases in child care is suspended. Given the widespread transmission of Omicron and changes to the province's testing approach, child care agencies will no longer routinely notify families of positive cases or absences due to COVID-19 symptoms. If absenteeism rises to approximately 30% however, the local Medical Officer of Health will notify families in affected programs and both voluntary and public health ordered closures will be reported.

Testing - Two rapid antigen tests per person will be supplied for the symptomatic testing of staff, providers, and children in licensed child care. Tests for children will be sent home to be completed there. Children in before and after school programs are expected to access rapid antigen tests at their school. If two consecutive rapid antigen tests (separated by 24 to 48 hours) are both negative, the symptomatic individual is less likely to have COVID-19 and must isolate until symptoms have improved for at least 24 hours (48 hours if gastrointestinal symptoms are present).

Children, staff, and providers must actively screen each day, regardless of access to testing. If they are symptomatic, isolation is mandatory, regardless of vaccination status and/or test access.

Masking - All staff/providers must wear a medical/surgical or N95 mask at all times.

HEPA Filter Units - Work is ongoing to deploy standalone HEPA filter units to the child care sector.

We recognize your child's attendance could be impacted by these changes. We will continue to keep you informed, but in the meanwhile, if you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to reach out to your Centre Supervisor. Thank you for your continued patience. We hope you and your family stay safe and keep well.

Sincerely,

Mary Sharifzadeh
Director, Programs