

CIRCULAR

Date: June 23, 2020

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To: Licensed child care facilities in schools or on school property, Manitoba School Division Superintendents, Principals of Funded Independent Schools, ELCC Program staff, K-12 Education Division (Manitoba Education)

Subject: **Temporary Child Care Services and Re-opening of Schools**

Type: Policy For Internal Reference Only
 Procedure Information Only

Effective Date: Immediately

Topic: Temporary child care services in schools or on school property

On June 11, the provincial government announced the Phase 3 Draft Plan of *Restoring Safe Services: Manitoba's Pandemic and Economic Roadmap for Recovery*, which would allow child care facilities to begin working towards safely increasing their operations to full, regular licensed capacity starting on June 21, with guidelines in place. On June 17, the Premier announced the release of the final plan for Phase 3, which was based on public health advice, consultation with key sectors and feedback from the public.

Schools are currently allowed to reopen for staff and specific program use in June, provided public health orders can be followed. Classroom learning will remain suspended for the remainder of the school year. However, students are now able to meet with teachers for assessments and transition planning for classes in the fall. School divisions are also implementing plans and procedures for infection prevention and shared use of commons spaces. These plans and procedures follow provincial guidelines for limited use of school facilities found at www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid/support/limited_use_school.html.

Dr. Brent Roussin, Manitoba's Chief Provincial Public Health Officer, continues to recommend good physical distancing strategies and infection control practices in schools, child care centres and other businesses to help control the spread of COVID-19.

Under Phase 3, child care centres located in schools or on school property in all school divisions are able to stay open or reopen to provide temporary child care services in accordance with all existing public health and program guidelines. Information on Phase 3, including service restoration, workplace guidance, and expanding child care services can be found at www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/phase-three.html.

Schools and child care centres located in schools or on school property should review these considerations as we move towards full licensed capacity under Phase 3 of *Restoring Safe Services*.

Communication

It is imperative that child care centres located in schools or on school property and school administrators are in regular and ongoing contact to share operational plans and information on how they will manage use of shared space and physical distancing in common areas used by the child care facility and the school.

Health screening

To ensure a safe environment, child care centres already have robust daily measures in place to screen the health of children, families and staff arriving at a child care centre prior to dropping off children.

With the limited reopening of schools, school divisions are responsible for developing and communicating their policy and procedures for the safe return of staff, students and visitors, including re-entry plans that meet public health requirements. Schools are expected to share their screening plans and health protection measures with child care facilities located within the school or on school property.

Occupancy

Occupancy within a school must be based on maintaining physical distancing of two metres/six feet in individual rooms, with no more than 25 people per room. Limited access to school facilities will continue to be permitted in settings where physical distancing can be maintained.

Multiple groups of 25 can operate within a school setting if they can be separated to prevent contact throughout the day. This may be done through the use of separate exits or by staggered drop-off/pick-up schedules. Schools will need to exercise caution and consider the total number of students and staff in the building at any given time to avoid congestion and/or gatherings beyond the public health recommendations on group size. The Limited Use of School Facilities guidelines provide for less than two metres for “brief exchanges and when providing or receiving a service.”

Beginning on June 21, child care centres can begin expanding towards full licensed capacity. Based on public health advice, child care centres have been provided with different requirements for physical distancing than schools. Children with no symptoms can continue to be cared for as one would normally care for a child, including comforting and appropriate personal contact. Centres should continue to follow the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Early Learning and Child Care Practice Guidance](#) for information on how to care for children while incorporating some social distancing measures into the child care setting when it is possible to do so (e.g., meal and nap times).

Shared spaces

With open communication and regular information sharing, larger groups of children passing by students, staff and visitors at the school can be avoided or properly controlled.

For example, a child care facility can provide their daily schedule and expected use of entrances/exits to the school to avoid higher traffic times where students and visitors may be attending the school. Procedures for physical distancing between groups from both the child care centre and the school can be agreed upon for using entrances/exits to ensure appropriate distancing can be maintained at all times.

For shared spaces such as washrooms and hallways, or other areas where children and staff may be passing by one another, the focus should remain on proper physical distancing. Children who may not be old enough to understand physical distancing should be accompanied at all times by an adult/staff to ensure safe distances are maintained in shared spaces.

Additional resources

Information circulars about COVID-19 and child care, including the Coronavirus (COVID-19) Early Learning and Child Care Practice Guidance manual, are available at www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/infomanitobans/childcare.html.

For more information on Manitoba Education's COVID-19 response, including regularly updated Frequently Asked Questions, please see www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/covid.

Thank you for your cooperation as we work together to continue to support Manitoba families, children and communities.

ELCC Program, Department of Families
K-12 Education Division, Department of Education