

# Guidance for RECEs on offering home-based child care during COVID-19

## General questions

### Is home-based child care allowed to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Home-based child care —both licensed and unlicensed — can continue to operate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

[\*Operational Guidance for Child Care During COVID-19 Outbreak\*](#), from the Ministry of Education, can provide you with details around ratios, staffing, health and safety protocols and more.

### Does the order limiting public gatherings apply to home-based childcare?

The Government of Ontario released the [\*Roadmap to Reopen\*](#) plan with restrictions limiting public gatherings in every step. The College reached out to government and received confirmation from the Ministry of Education that this order does not apply to home-based child care. Home-based child care is protected as an essential service and can continue to operate in accordance with the normal requirements of the Child Care and Early Years Act. This includes licensed and unlicensed child care and includes all home-based child care, not just those providing emergency care to children of health care and other essential workers.

### The child care centre that I work at has been closed, and one of the families has asked if I will provide care for their child in their home. They need to work, and I need the income, but I'm concerned that this might not be allowed. What does the College say?

The College does not prohibit private care-giving arrangements with workplace clients. We recognize that this service can be valuable to members, families and children by providing continuity of care. Standard V of the Code and Standards advises members to be aware that dual relationships can arise due to these types of arrangements, and provides the steps to address and manage them. For further information on using your professional judgment to manage the risks of dual relationships, see the College's [\*Practice Guideline on Dual Relationships\*](#).

### What are my professional obligations?

Standard III of the [\*Code of Ethics and Standards of Practice\*](#) focuses on the safety, health and well-being of the learning environment. It states that RECEs are familiar with a variety of strategies to promote and support children's well-being and safety in the learning

environment including, but not limited to, nutrition and physical, mental and emotional health. RECEs observe and monitor the learning environment and take responsibility to avoid exposing children to harmful or unsafe situations.

### **What guidance is there for RECEs providing home-based child care?**

RECEs providing licensed home-based child care should reach out first to their home child care agency and ensure that they are in compliance with any requirements from the Ministry of Education.

## **Policies and procedures**

Child care services must have policies and procedures in place to conduct daily health checks, implement sanitary practices and exclude children, parents and staff who are sick. Please consult your local Medical Officer of Health for guidance in developing your policies and procedures. You may also wish to visit the [Ontario government's webpage on COVID-19](#) for additional tools and resources.

### **Symptoms:**

COVID-19 symptoms for children could include:

- Runny nose
- Sore throat
- Diarrhea

COVID-19 symptoms for adults include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Difficulty breathing
- Pneumonia in both lungs (diagnosed through a chest X-ray)

### **Higher-risk individuals:**

Your risk of severe disease may be higher if you have a weakened immune system. This may be the case for:

- Older people
- People with chronic disease (for example, diabetes, cancer, heart, renal or chronic lung disease)

All persons over 70 years of age and individuals who are immunocompromised are advised to self-isolate for a period of 14 days. Members are strongly encouraged to take steps to protect any such family members if they are providing child care from their home.

### **Actions to protect your health:**

- Washing your hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer
- Sneezing and coughing into your sleeve
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth
- Avoid contact with people who are sick
- Stay at home if you are sick and remind parents that they should be monitoring their children's health and keeping children who are unwell at home
- If traveling outside of Canada, stay home for 14 days and remind parents to do so as well.

(You may also wish to print and post the following: [Poster - What you need to know to help you and your family stay healthy](#))

### **Surface cleaning:**

For detailed information, please visit: <https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-environmental-cleaning.pdf?la=en>

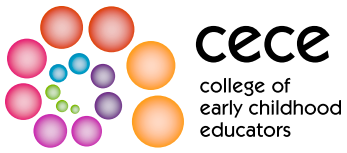
### **Social distancing:**

Social distancing involves taking steps to limit the number of people you come into close contact with (i.e., within two metres of another person) outside of your immediate family. This recommendation is in place to limit the spread of COVID-19 in the community.

Social distancing may be difficult to maintain in a child care setting; however, supervising smaller groups of children and offering increased outdoor play are strategies that support social distancing. In outdoor environments, RECEs should continue to be conscious of the cleanliness of the surfaces that children will come into contact with. For example, in many areas, authorities have recommended against the use of public playground structures.

### **Talking to children about COVID-19:**

The Canadian Pediatric Society released [advice about talking to children](#) about the current situation.



## Other resources

[Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Guidance: Emergency Childcare Centres](#)

[Public Health Agency of Canada](#)

[Ontario Ministry of Health](#)