



**Bowen  
Children's  
Centre**

## **Bowen Children's Centre Society**

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# **Communicable Disease Policy**

## **Purpose**

The purpose of the Communicable Disease Policy is to provide guidance and direction to the BCC Board, the Executive Director, employees and families in addressing health and wellness during times of a communicable disease outbreak. This policy also includes specific guidance in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Policy**

In BC, the monitoring and licensing of regulated childcare centres is the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, which has the authority to close any childcare facility for health and safety reasons. Accordingly, during a communicable disease outbreak, BCC must follow the Ministry of Health's guidelines at all times.

Closure orders from the Ministry of Health overrule any decision made by an individual childcare facility to stay open during a communicable disease outbreak. If, however, no closure order is made, BCC may choose to remain open during a communicable disease outbreak. In such cases, BCC will adhere to the procedures outlined in this policy. Any additional, interim changes to BCC's usual policies or procedures resulting from a communicable disease outbreak, and any relevant information regarding the outbreak from authorized sources, will also be communicated to all families and staff in a timely manner.

Given that the nature and scale of each communicable disease outbreak is unique, the procedures below are intended to offer high level guidance on the measures that BCC may put in place during an outbreak, including during a pandemic.

From time to time, guidance in relation to a specific communicable disease may be appended to this policy at **Appendix A**. Currently, additional protocols and procedures have been developed in relation to COVID-19.

## Procedures

1. If there is a severe outbreak of a communicable disease, BCC may be directed by government authorities to make changes to their usual policies and protocols. In such cases, regardless of what information may be available in the news or on social media, BCC will follow the recommendations and requirements for childcare settings provided by the following authorized sources:
  - a. Ministry of Children and Family Development;
  - b. Ministry of Health, including agencies responsible for childcare licensing, the Provincial Health Officer and the BC Centre for Disease Control; and
  - c. WorkSafe BC.
2. Legislated childcare ratios must be maintained during a communicable disease outbreak. In the event that employees are sick or otherwise unable to work and the required child to staff ratio cannot be met, BCC may be required to make any of the following changes to accommodate employee absence or additional cleaning responsibilities:
  - a. reducing or staggering the hours of operation;
  - b. reducing the number of days of operation; and
  - c. reducing the number of children allowed to attend each BCC program at any one time.
3. Access to BCC, for both employees and families, may change during a communicable disease outbreak. New policies and processes will be put in place to reflect these changes and will be communicated to families and employees.
4. In the event that the Ministry of Health provides a regional or provincial quarantine recommendation or requirement linked to international travel, potential exposures or individual symptoms, BCC may develop new policies and processes that require both employees and children to remain at home for a period of time if:
  - a. the child or employee has particular symptoms, regardless of whether they are feeling ill;
  - b. if anyone in the child or employee's household has particular symptoms;
  - c. if the child or employee, or anyone in the child or employee's household, has been directed to self-isolate by a public health official; or
  - d. if the child or employee, or anyone in the child or employee's household, has travelled to an area that is subject to a provincial or regional quarantine recommendation or requirement issued by the Ministry of Health.

These policies and processes will apply equally to all children, families and employees. No exceptions will be made.

5. In the event of a communicable disease outbreak, BCC will implement measures that include, but are not limited to, the following:
  - a. introducing additional cleaning and handwashing protocols such as:
    - i. using a Ministry of Health-approved sanitizing solution within the program areas three times a day to sanitize high touch areas and equipment;
    - ii. increasing handwashing and using social stories and instruction to promote healthy handwashing habits among children;
    - iii. following additional cleaning protocols recommended by the Ministry of Health and WorkSafe BC
  - b. supporting children, employees, parents and caregivers in minimizing direct contact with one another, including:
    - i. avoiding close greetings (e.g., hugs, handshakes);
    - ii. reminding older children to keep “hands to yourself” and providing instruction on ways to have less contact (e.g. creating games that include basic physical distancing principles);
    - iii. striving to create play spaces for younger children that automatically provide a safe distance, (i.e. six feet) and/or minimizing the number of children playing in a space
    - iv. striving to minimize the number of different staff that interact with the same children throughout the day;
    - v. encouraging employees to use face masks at drop off if a child is experiencing distress and needs to be handed from adult to adult; and
    - vi. encouraging employees to use a shield or mask when changing diapers.
  - c. changing physical access to BCC and modifying programs in a manner that may include:
    - i. revising drop-off and pick procedures;
    - ii. moving programs to different spaces to optimize safety and environmental controls;
    - iii. organizing children into smaller groups during activities and meal times;
    - iv. using different table configurations (e.g. separating tables, using plexiglass dividers)
    - v. incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children and employees;

- vi. removing toys that encourage group play in close proximity or increase the likelihood of physical contact;
  - vii. ensuring that only food sent by families is eaten at BCC and that food is not shared by children or employees;
  - viii. ensuring that beds in the nap rooms are six feet apart and are “toe to toe” rather than “head to head” or, if this is not possible, arranging beds “head to toe”; and
  - ix. staggering routines for lunchtime and bathroom use.
6. In the event of a closure due to a communicable disease outbreak that is less than 30 days in duration, fees may be payable as per usual operations. Fees payable during closures exceeding 30 days will be determined by the Ministry of Children and Family Development.
  7. During a closure resulting from a communicable disease outbreak, government fee reductions such as the Child Care Fee Reduction Initiative (CCFRI) and the Affordable Child Care benefit (ACCB), or their equivalents, may or may not be provided. Families should contact the Ministry of Children and Family Development directly to discuss the government policies in relation to these payments.
  8. Recognizing that fear-based responses may emerge during a communicable disease outbreak, BCC will continue to strictly adhere to its zero-tolerance policy on harassment and discrimination and promote an inclusive-based approach that provides a safe space for all families, children and employees. Harassment and discrimination, including that based on race, colour, ancestry, and place of origin, are not permitted and will be dealt with immediately in accordance with BCC’s Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy.
  9. BCC is not responsible should an employee, enrolled child or enrolled child’s family member contract a communicable disease.

<b>Related BCC policies and legislation</b>
<i>Inclusion Policy</i>
<i>Workplace Bullying and Harassment Policy</i>

# Appendix A: COVID-19

*This policy is informed by information provided to childcare facilities by the BC Centre for Disease Control in the document [“Protocol for child or staff with symptoms of COVID-19 in a child care setting”](#) (May 15, 2020)*

## Part 1: Daily Checks for Respiratory Illness and Requirements for Staying Home

1. Parents and caregivers must assess themselves and their child daily for symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other infectious respiratory disease before sending their child to BCC. Employees must similarly conduct a wellness self-assessment. According to the BC Centre for Disease Control, COVID-19 symptoms include:
  - Fever
  - Chills
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath
  - Sore throat and painful swallowing
  - Stuffy or runny nose
  - Loss of sense of smell
  - Headache
  - Muscle aches
  - Fatigue
  - Loss of appetite
  
2. Staff may conduct daily checks for respiratory illness at drop-off by asking parents and caregivers to confirm that the child, or anyone in the child’s household, does not have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19, or other respiratory disease.
  
3. A child or employee that has any symptoms of COVID-19 will not be permitted to attend BCC for 10 days or until the symptoms resolve, whichever is longer. Additionally, a child or employee will not be permitted to attend BCC for a period of 10 days if:
  - a. another person in the child or employee’s household develops any of the symptoms of COVID-19 and is not able to provide evidence that they do not have COVID-19;

- b. the child or employee, or a member of the child or employee's household, has been identified by a public health official as having had close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and has been instructed to self-isolate; or
  - c. the child or employee, or a member of the child or employee's household, has received a positive diagnosis of COVID-19, regardless of whether or not they are exhibiting symptoms.
4. If a child or employee is assessed by their family physician or nurse practitioner and it is determined that they do not have COVID-19, they may return to BCC once the symptoms resolve.
5. If a child or employee, or a member of their household, has travelled outside of Canada, the child or employee will not be permitted to attend BCC for at least 14 days from the date of their return to Canada.
6. If a parent, caregiver or employee is unsure if they, or their child should self-isolate, they should utilize the BC Centre for Disease Control's [Self-Assessment Tool](#), contact 8-1-1 or a family physician or nurse practitioner to be assessed for COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.
7. Parents, caregivers or employees seeking further information about COVID-19 should consult materials produced by the Ministry of Health, including information from the BC Centre for Disease Control.

## **Part 2: Protocols for a child or employee with symptoms of COVID-19 in a childcare setting**

1. If a child develops any COVID-19 symptoms while at BCC, the following steps must be followed:
  - a. Identify a staff member to supervise the child
  - b. Identified staff should immediately put on mask/face shield and gloves
  - c. Staff should immediately separate the symptomatic child from others in a supervised area until they can go home.
  - d. Staff should contact the child's parent or caregiver to pick them up immediately.
  - e. Staff should contact the executive director.
  - f. Where possible, staff should maintain a distance of 2 metres from the symptomatic child. If this is not possible, the staff member may use a mask or a tissue to cover their nose and mouth.
  - g. Staff should provide the child with tissues and support, as necessary, so that they can practice respiratory hygiene (e.g coughing into the elbow).
  - h. Staff should pen outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.

- i. Staff should avoid touching the child's body fluids.
  - j. Once the child is picked up, the supervising staff member must wash their hands thoroughly and clean and disinfect the space where the child was separated, as well as any areas used by the child (e.g., bathroom, common areas).
2. If a staff member develops symptoms while at BCC, they should go home immediately. If the staff member is unable to leave immediately, the following should occur:
  - a. The symptomatic staff member should immediately separate themselves from others at a distance of at least 2 meters; and
  - b. The symptomatic staff member should use tissue or mask to cover their mouth and practice good respiratory hygiene while they wait for a replacement or to be taken home.
3. Once the symptomatic staff member has departed, remaining staff must clean and disinfect the space where the staff member was separated, as well as any areas used by the staff member (e.g., bathroom, common areas).
4. After following these procedures, staff with additional or ongoing health and safety concerns should contact 8-1-1 or the local public health unit to seek further advice.