



VANCOUVER CHILD STUDY CENTRE – COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AND POLICY

Updated: August 30, 2021

RESOURCES FOR CHILD CARE OPERATORS

In order to comply with the necessary safety protocols surrounding Covid-19, VCSC has consulted the BC Center for Disease Control Guidelines for Schools/Childcare Settings. We have also conferred with our Vancouver Coastal Health Licensing Officer to develop a sound reopening plan.

Please see below some helpful resources that have informed VCSC's COVID-19 policy:

[BC Centre for Disease Control Website - Child Care](#) (Updated: August 26, 2021)

[COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings](#) (Updated: February 12, 2021)

[WorkSafeBC: Communicable Disease Prevention](#)

[BC Child Care Health and Safety](#) (Updated: August 24, 2021)

[Vancouver Coastal Health: COVID-19](#)

COVID-19 Self-Assessment Tools:

[BCCDC: When to get tested for COVID-19](#)

[BC COVID Self-Assessment Tool](#)

What we know about COVID-19 in children (source: BC Centre for Disease Control)

- COVID-19 has a relatively low infection rate among young children. Based on published literature to date, the majority of cases of COVID-19 in young children are the result of droplet spread from a symptomatic adult family member in the household setting. Children do not appear to be the primary drivers of COVID-19 spread in child care facilities, schools, or other community settings.
- Children and youth typically have much milder symptoms of COVID-19 most often presenting with low-grade fever, tiredness and a dry cough.
- Children can experience the same symptoms as adults, but may also show symptoms differently. For example, fatigue may show in children as lack of appetite, decreased activity, or changes in behaviour.
- For younger children maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing physical contact instead.
- Child care settings differ from kindergarten to grade 12 (K-12) schools as child care settings generally have smaller and consistent cohorts of staff and children, typically serve younger age groups (0-5 years of age), and provide a less structured environment. As such, the public health guidance differs between the two settings to reflect these considerations.



Risk Identification and Control

COVID-19 virus

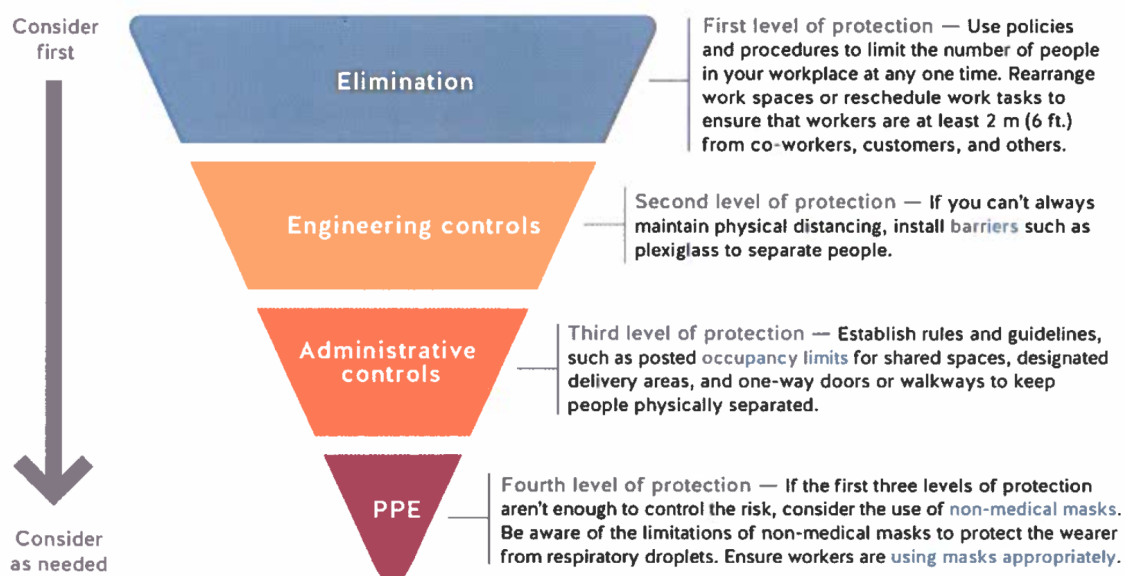
Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to more severe illness. In late 2019, the **coronavirus disease** (COVID-19) was first identified, and in March 2020, the World Health Organization declared a global pandemic. Viruses change over time and can lead to new versions, or variants. When changes lead to a variant that can spread more easily, cause more serious illness, or impact treatments or vaccine effectiveness, it is called a Variant of Concern (VoC).

In recent weeks, Delta has become the most common COVID-19 variant in the province. Delta spreads easily between people and may lead to more serious outcomes than other versions of COVID-19 for adults. For children, Delta leads to more cases but the outcomes remain the same as with other variants.

The COVID-19 virus is spread by the respiratory droplets an infected person produces when they breathe, cough, sneeze, talk, or sing. If you are in contact with an infected person, the virus can enter your body if droplets get into your throat, nose, or eyes.

Reduce the risk of person-to-person transmission

To reduce the risk of the virus spreading through droplets in the air, protocols have been implemented to protect against identified risks. Different protocols offer different levels of protection. Whenever possible, we will use the protocol that offers the highest level of protection.





Below is a detailed list of the measures VCSC has put in place in order to control and minimize risk of spread.

First Level Protection: Elimination

Children and the Environment

Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C., and the fact that children are at a much lower risk of developing COVID-19, public health guidelines for young children differ from that of adults. Physical distancing of 2m is not an expectation among children in a child care setting where risk of transmission is low. Instead, health officers emphasize the importance of minimizing direct physical contact (e.g., hugs and handshakes). VCSC has adopted the following protocols to encourage children to spread out and minimize direct physical contact.

- Staff will teach and encourage children to avoid direct physical contact (“hands to yourself”) and practice appropriate distancing (“two arm lengths apart”) through games and songs.
- The Ministry encourages time outside and asserts that outdoor playgrounds are a safe environment for children to play together; emphasis will be placed on minimizing direct physical contact between children and proper hand hygiene before and after play.
- Where possible, activities and provocations will be thoughtfully set up for individual play, for smaller groups, or created outside.
- VCSC will have a designated area for children who may develop symptoms of illness during class until they can be picked up.
- VCSC will continue to have a teacher to student ratio of 1:6 to ensure increased supervision of children.

Staff and Visitors

- Staff will maintain a distance of 2 metres from one another (and other adults) and minimize direct physical contact with children.
- Parents, caregivers, health-care providers, and volunteers entering child care settings are limited to those supporting activities that are of benefit to children’s learning and wellbeing (e.g., during gradual entry), and only with expressed and advanced consent from VCSC in accordance with our policy and protocols.
- All visitors will provide active confirmation (e.g., sign in, at entry, e-mail before entry, etc.) that they have no symptoms of illness and **all adults are required to wear a mask at all times** while on VCSC premises.



Pick up and Drop off

- Pick-up and drop-off of preschool children will occur outside.
- Adults will wear masks upon approach and in line to sign children in / out.
- Drop-off times will be staggered and families will need to maintain 2m physical distance with other families.

Second Level Protection: Engineering Controls

Due to the nature of the environment, physical barriers, such as plexiglass, would not be practical. However, adults and staff will be expected to maintain 2m distance from one another as part of our First Level Protection.

Third Level Protection: Administrative Controls

Staff

Staff must perform a daily health check, and are not permitted to come into work if they fall into the following categories:

- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms such as sore throat, fever, nausea, sneezing or coughing;
- Staff who have travelled internationally;
- Staff who live in a household with or is a close contact of someone who is COVID-19 positive

Children and Family Members

Children and family members must perform a daily health check, and are not permitted to enter the school if they fall into the following categories:

- Children and family members with COVID-19 symptoms such as sore throat, fever, nausea, sneezing or coughing;
- Children and family members who have travelled internationally;
- Children and family members who live in a household with or are a close contact of someone who is COVID-19 positive.

Please note: All families will need to inform VCSC of any international travel and failure to do so could result in an **immediate dismissal** from our program.



Self-isolation Guidelines:

- Staff and other adults in the child care setting and parents/caregivers of children are expected to follow the guidance from BCCDC as outlined in the [‘When to Get Tested for COVID-19’](#) resource. Staff, other adults, and children should not attend child care if they are sick.
- All families traveling outside of Canada will be asked to remain home for 14 days upon return and will need to be symptom free for 14 days before returning to class.
- Travelers who develop symptoms of COVID-19 during the self-isolation period should go for testing, but will still be required to complete their 14 days of self-isolation if they test negative.
- If your child lives with anyone that is a confirmed COVID-19 case they will need to self-isolate and not return to class until approved by public health.
- If told by public health or a health care provider that you or your child is a close contact of a COVID-19 case, self-isolation is required for 14 days from the day of last contact, even if you are subsequently tested and have a negative COVID-19 test result.
- Any child, staff or family members that show any COVID-19 symptoms must stay at home until symptoms have been resolved or has been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 and are fit to return to school.
- Anyone with allergy symptoms that are consistent with their usual seasonal allergies for the time of year (e.g., itchy eyes, runny nose, sneezing), and symptoms can be relieved by antihistamine or allergy medication, they may return to school. Prior to doing so, they should use the [BC COVID-19 self-assessment tool](#) or call 8-1-1 to assess symptoms or be assessed by a health care provider to determine if testing is required.
- If a staff member, child or other person develops symptoms while in the child care setting, follow the guidance in Appendix A, ‘What to do if a student or staff member develops symptoms.’

Food Safety and Snacks

- To avoid direct physical contact and cross-contamination, snack preparation and communal snack service will be suspended (along with snack fees).
- Parents are asked to pack their child’s snack and water in containers the child can open independently. Clearly label the child’s name on any containers and send these items in a separate lunch bag with the child’s name labelled on it.

Pick-Up and Drop-Off

- Parents will be asked to sanitize their hands before signing the sign-in/ sign-out sheet.
- Everyone will be asked to conduct a daily health check at home prior to coming to VCSC, and asked to provide a verbal health declaration upon arrival.
- All clothing items should be laundered before being worn to class, and families who use public transit will be asked to change their child’s clothing upon arrival.



- Children will be asked to change their shoes upon arrival, and outdoor shoes will be left in the child's assigned cubby.
- Accommodations will be made during the gradual entry period for children who are not ready for drop-off alone; however, we ask that parents wear a mask, use hand sanitizer before entering and keep a safe distance from other families.
- If there is a need for a parent to enter the building at any other time, there is a maximum of 1 adult per family entering with the child.
- Please leave non-participating siblings and other family members at home if possible.

Ventilation and Outdoor Space

- Outdoor spaces are ideal when weather permits; when possible, VCSC will have play time, snacks or meal breaks and learning activities outdoors. Every day there is a minimum of 30-45 minutes of outside play.
- All mechanical heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems are kept running (throughout the evening and weekends) and checked regularly to ensure they are working properly.
- Windows are opened as weather permits to replenish air indoors.

Case Finding, Contact Tracing and Outbreak Management

- Active testing of people with mild COVID-19 like symptoms (case finding) helps identify cases early in the course of their disease, determine whether others in close contact with them are at risk for infection (contact tracing), and ensure they get appropriate care and follow-up.
- If a staff or student in a school is confirmed by public health as positive for COVID-19, public health determines what actions should be taken, including if any staff or students who have been in contact with that person need to self-isolate, and if other staff and students' families should be notified.
- As a licensed child care facility, VCSC works closely with a designated Vancouver Coastal Health licensing officer to ensure that we have the proper policies and procedures in place for reporting any elevated absenteeism due to illness, to help with early identification of a potential cluster.



A Non-Biased, Inclusive Approach

Fear-based responses in times of pandemic or communicable disease, have historically led to actions stemming from bias and self-protective measures. Not only can these measures lead to conflict between parents, child care educators, and community members, but they can also lead to actions rooted in prejudice and bigotry. Vancouver Child Study Centre has an inclusive-based approach and works to be a safe space for all families and children; we will not tolerate acts of prejudice towards any parent, child, employee, or community member. Any such acts are subject to an immediate dismissal from our program.

Fourth Level Protection: Using PPE

- Staff will be wearing a clear face shield when indoors with the children; face shields help prevent fluid splashing while also providing an unobstructed view of the teacher's face, facial expressions, and lips.
- Staff will wear disposable gloves and face coverings when cleaning body fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine).
- Masks are required for any adult entering the building.
- Per BCCDC, for young children over the age of two, masks are generally not recommended as they can be irritating and may lead to increased touching of the face and eyes.
- VCSC respects the individual choice for a parent to send their child in a mask; however, staff will not be responsible for ensuring the child is wearing the mask correctly at all times.
- Any use of masks must also be done in conjunction with proper hand washing and physical distancing.

Additional Cleaning and Hygiene

In order to reduce the risk of surface transmission, VCSC has taken the following additional cleaning and hygiene measures:

Daily Cleaning and Disinfecting

Regular cleaning and disinfecting are essential in preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. School settings will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the [BCCDC Public Health Guidance](#).

- General cleaning and disinfecting of the area will occur at least once a day.
- Frequently-touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles).
- Toys that have been in contact with body fluids (mouth, nose, etc.) will be immediately put into a separate bin until they can be properly sanitized.
- Daily cleaning checklist for staff (must sign and place initial when task is completed).



Education and Training

In response to the COVID-19 virus, VCSC has established the following means of sharing information across the organization:

- COVID-19 information on the VCSC main webpage.
- All emails to families and staff – sent on a regular basis.
- Latest bulletins and guidelines from Regulators (BCCDC/ Provincial Health Office/ VCH) are shared with families and staff.
- Physical distancing markers and accessible hand sanitizer for pick up and drop off.
- Daily Health Check Questionnaire posted visibly at centre entrance.
- All staff and families have received the policies for staying at home when sick.

Handwashing

Staff will encourage proper and frequent hand washing with the children including:

- Ensuring hand washing upon entry and during every transition such as washroom, art, play time, before, and after snacks.
- Using social stories, illustrated diagrams, and direct teacher instruction with children to promote healthy hand washing habits and respiratory etiquette.
- VCSC asks that parents also reinforce proper and frequent hand hygiene with their children at home.

Cough/Sneeze Etiquette

Cough/sneeze etiquette will be encouraged, which are a combination of preventative measures that minimizes the transmission of diseases via droplet or airborne routes.

Cough/sneeze etiquette includes the following components:

- Cover your mouth and nose with an elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing to reduce the spread of germs.
- Use tissues to contain secretions, and immediately dispose of any tissues you have used into the garbage as soon as possible and wash your hands afterwards.
- Turn your head away from others when coughing or sneezing.



Provincial Guidance and Precedence

Vancouver Child Study Centre (VCSC) is licensed and regulated through the Ministry of Health, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, and Child Care Facilities Licensing. VCSC may be directed by the Ministry or by a Vancouver Coastal Health Child Care Licensing Officer to close operations during a pandemic or other communicable disease outbreak.

VCSC will follow all directives and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health. The legal authority to close a childcare program for public health reasons falls under the purview of the local Medical Health Officer and the Provincial Health Officer, and their decision overrides any decision that could be made by our board of directors or wishes of VCSC families.

Please note: Any updated recommendations by the Regulators (BCCDC, Provincial Health Office, or VCH) will set precedence. Any temporary changes to VCSC's COVID-19 policy during a pandemic/outbreak will be communicated in writing, via email, and will link to the authorized source of information that our change is based on.



APPENDIX A: What to do if a staff or child develops symptoms

<i>If a Child Develops Any New Symptoms of Illness While in a Child Care Setting</i>	<i>If a Staff Member Develops Any New Symptoms of Illness While in a Child Care Setting</i>
<p>Staff must take the following steps:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Immediately separate the symptomatic child from others in a supervised area. 2. Contact the child's parent or caregiver to pick them up as soon as possible. 3. Where possible, maintain a two-metre distance from the ill child. If not possible, staff should wear a non-medical mask or face covering if available and tolerated or use a tissue to cover their nose and mouth. 4. Provide the child tissues to cover their coughs or sneezes. Throw away used tissues as soon as possible and perform hand hygiene. 5. Avoid touching the child's body fluids (e.g., mucous, saliva). If you do, practice diligent hand hygiene. 6. Once the child is picked up, practice diligent hand hygiene. 7. Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the child was separated and any areas recently used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas). <p>Parents or caregivers should pick up their child as soon as possible if they are notified their child is ill.</p>	<p>Staff should go home as soon as possible.</p> <p>If unable to leave immediately:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Symptomatic staff should separate themselves into an area away from others. 2. Maintain a distance of two metres from others. 3. Use a tissue or non-medical mask to cover their nose and mouth while they wait to be picked up. 4. Staff responsible for facility cleaning must clean and disinfect the space where the staff member was separated and any areas used by them (e.g., classroom, bathroom, common areas).

Reference: [BCCDC Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings](#)