

Toronto Public Health Pandemic Plan A Planning Guide for Day Nurseries

March 23, 2020

Table of Contents

1.0	<i>Introduction</i>	2
1.1	Purpose of this guide	2
2.0	<i>Childcare Centres and Day Nurseries – Specific Issues</i>	2
2.1	Communications plan	2
2.2	Emergency contact lists	3
2.3	Protection of children whose families cannot care for them	3
2.4	Ill children or staff at the centre	3
2.5	Hand hygiene	4
2.6	Respiratory etiquette	5
2.7	Activities and toys to avoid during a pandemic	5
2.8	Cleaning surfaces and objects	5
2.9	Food services	6
2.10	Handling Linen and Laundry	6
2.11	Changes in program delivery or closures	6
3.0	<i>Planning Checklist</i>	7
3.1	Planning checklist - short version	7
3.2	Planning checklist - long version	9

Disclaimer: This Planning Guide is a tool to support planning for pandemic in the day nurseries sector. Toronto Public Health is not responsible for any misinterpretation or misuse of this guide.

1.0 Introduction

Toronto Public Health has prepared a number of planning guides to assist community partners in developing their own pandemic plans. The guides are intended to be used as planning tools. All agencies, organizations and other partners should use these tools alongside the specific advice provided by federal, provincial and local authorities during an actual pandemic situation.

1.1 Purpose of this guide

This general planning guide identifies issues and critical elements of emergency preparedness that organizations should consider in planning for a pandemic. Although Toronto Public Health will identify broad public health issues, every organization must plan for the specific disruptions it will face during a pandemic.

The overall goal of pandemic planning is to reduce illness (morbidity), death (mortality), and social disruption resulting from a pandemic. Although this guide identifies specific issues associated with a pandemic, much of the information applies to other emergencies as well.

The Day Nurseries Planning Guide is an evolving document and as planning continues at the federal, provincial and local levels, updated information will be added.

2.0 Childcare Centres and Day Nurseries – Specific Issues

For the purposes of this guide, the terms ‘day nursery’ and ‘childcare centre’ will be used interchangeably to refer to a premise that receives more than five children who are not of common parentage, primarily for the purpose of providing temporary care.

Childcare centres should encourage good infection prevention and control practices among staff, children and visitors to help reduce risk of illness. For information on requirements and best practices for infection prevention in childcare centres see [2019 Infection Prevention and Control in Child Care Centres – Requirements and Best Practices](#)

2.1 Communications plan

Each childcare centre should prepare a communications plan that specifies how the centre will communicate with staff, volunteers, parents or alternates, public health authorities, and the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services during a pandemic. Important topics that may need to be communicated include information on infection control and possible day nursery closures. Day nurseries should provide community members access to credible sources of information. Toronto Public Health may use day nurseries to distribute fact sheets and information on the pandemic virus to parents and staff. During a pandemic, TPH’s two primary communication vehicles will be:

- the TPH website <https://www.toronto.ca/home/covid-19> where information will be posted as soon as it becomes available, and
- Toronto Public Health Hotline: 416-338-7600.

Homeless and housing service provider agencies should consider partnerships with other health and non- health related agencies to develop strategies which may be used during a pandemic. Agencies should consider the following when developing your pandemic plans:

- connect with other health organizations (e.g., community health centres, hospitals, local physicians, public health, volunteer agencies)
- consult existing pandemic plans (e.g., the Toronto Pandemic Plan)
- identify ways to share resources during a pandemic
- develop possible scenarios and identify disruptions that will be faced during a pandemic and how they will affect the agency or facility

2.2 Emergency contact lists

Each childcare centre should prepare and keep up-to-date a hard copy list of contact information for staff, volunteers, parents or alternates, Toronto Public Health and Ministry officials. Childcare centres should expand their current lists of contact information of individuals pre-approved for child pick-up, in case the designated persons are unavailable during a pandemic.

2.3 Protection of children whose families cannot care for them

Childcare centres should develop plans for situations in which no next of kin or guardian is available to care for a child, either temporarily or permanently, because the next of kin or guardian is ill, in hospital, or has died. Current protocols for notifying children's aid societies should be followed.

2.4 Ill children or staff at the centre

Children and staff who are ill should stay at home. When a child or staff member develops symptoms of respiratory illness while at the centre, parents should be notified immediately to pick up their ill child and ill staff should immediately go home. Ill staff and parents of ill children should advise the centre of absences due to respiratory illness.

While awaiting parental pick-up, separate the ill child from others by removing the child from the regular care-giving room to an office or a separate area under supervision. Staff should provide the child with tissue to cover his or her mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and should try to keep a distance of at least two metres (six feet) from the ill child, if possible. The child can be encouraged to lie down on a cot or mat while waiting for the parent or guardian. Tissues should be disposed of immediately in a garbage can. The child should practise hand hygiene following disposal of the tissue.

Staff providing direct care to a child with respiratory illness may require personal protective equipment (e.g., surgical masks). Information regarding specific precautions will be communicated

as information about the pandemic virus becomes available. Hand hygiene should be practised by both the child and staff members. Environmental cleaning of the space the child was separated to should be conducted once they have been picked up.

Follow the advice of your local public health authority on when ill staff and children can return to the centre during a pandemic.

2.5 Hand hygiene

Hand hygiene is an important element of infection control in all childcare centres. During a pandemic, hand hygiene should be reinforced and practised by staff, children, parents or alternates, and visitors.

[Hand hygiene posters](#) should be posted at the entrance and in areas where they are likely to be seen to remind staff and children to practice hand hygiene frequently.

Washing hands with plain soap and water is recommended in childcare centres as the mechanical action is effective at removing visible soil as well as microbes. In instances where hand washing sinks are not available, supervised [use of alcohol based hand sanitizers](#) (ABHS) may be considered. If hands are visibly soiled, alcohol-based hand sanitizers may not be effective at eliminating respiratory viruses. It is recommended that in addition to existing sinks, an increased numbers of hand sanitizing stations (e.g. wall mounted hand sanitizer dispensers) as well as tissues and waste receptacles be provided. Childcare centres should ensure:

- Additional tissue supplies and waste receptacles are made available.
- If ABHS are provided to supplement hand washing facilities, secured dispensers should be placed in supervised areas.
- Administration and staff are reminded that Safety Data Sheets and product labels provide additional information regarding placement, storage and warnings associated with ABHS.

Hands should be cleaned frequently. At a minimum, practise hand hygiene:

- before eating lunch or snacks
- before and after food preparation
- after using the toilet
- after sneezing or coughing
- after wiping a child's nose (or a child wiping his/her own nose)
- before and after using shared computers, sports equipment, toys, musical instruments etc.
- upon entering or leaving the childcare centre

Childcare centres should consider developing a written policy on the use of alcohol-based hand sanitizers and obtain written permission from parents permitting the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer on their child.

For more information on hand hygiene, visit our webpage at <https://www.toronto.ca/community-people/health-wellness-care/health-programs-advice/hand-hygiene/>.

2.6 Respiratory etiquette

To prevent the spread of respiratory infections, proper respiratory etiquette should be taught to children and regularly practiced by staff and visitors. [Respiratory etiquette posters](#) should be posted at the entrance and in areas where they are likely to be seen to remind staff and students to practice proper respiratory etiquette.

Respiratory etiquette includes:

- Covering your nose and mouth during coughing and sneezing with a tissue or by turning your head away from others and sneezing or coughing into your sleeve or elbow
- Disposing of used tissues into the garbage immediately after use
- Practicing proper hand hygiene immediately after coughing or sneezing

2.7 Activities and toys to avoid during a pandemic

Sensory play using water, playdoh, pasta, sand, or other materials that cannot be readily disinfected should be discontinued during a pandemic. Plush or stuffed toys should also be avoided, since they cannot be readily cleaned and disinfected.

2.8 Cleaning surfaces and objects

Regular cleaning and disinfecting of objects and high-touch surfaces will help to prevent the transmission of viruses from contaminated objects and surfaces. Increased monitoring of hand cleaning supplies is also recommended to ensure all sinks in washrooms, kitchens and classrooms are well stocked with hand washing supplies at all times (i.e., soap and paper towels).

As per standard procedures, it is recommended that childcare programs have toys that are easily cleaned and disinfected (e.g., avoid plush toys). It may be prudent to increase the frequency of the cleaning schedule for these items, especially when illness is circulating in the setting or the local community or if symptomatic children have been playing with the toys.

Childcare administrators are encouraged to review existing activities and practices within their settings to help determine where enhancements or increased cleaning frequencies may be recommended.

High-Touch Surfaces

It is recommended that high-touch objects and surfaces (e.g. pencil sharpeners, water fountain knobs and push buttons, doorknobs, faucet handles, toys, electronic devices and hand rails) are cleaned and disinfected regularly according to the childcare centre's standard procedures for routine cleaning, disinfecting, and waste handling.

There is no evidence to suggest that the mouthpieces of water fountains are a major source of virus transmission, however they should be cleaned regularly according to manufacture recommendations. Water fountain knobs and push buttons are considered a significant source of virus transmission and should be cleaned and disinfected in line with childcare centre high-touch surfaces cleaning protocols

Cleaning Products

Cleaning with water and household detergents and use of common disinfectant products should be sufficient for cleaning and disinfection. If household or commercial disinfectant cleaning products are not readily available, hard surfaces can be disinfected using a mixture of 1-part bleach (5% sodium hypochlorite) and 9 parts water, ensuring the dilute solution makes contact with the surface for one minute for disinfection.

2.9 Food services

During a pandemic, childcare centres should reinforce routine food safety and sanitation practices. Childcare centres should also consider the following:

- Reinforce regular hand washing by staff members who prepare food.
- Use disposable cutlery and pre-packaged food, if staffing levels are low.
- Consider stockpiling a 6–8-week supply of non-perishable food, in case deliveries of food are disrupted.
- Plan for alternative food supplies in the event that regular catering services are interrupted

2.10 Handling Linen and Laundry

In most cases no special precautions are recommended for handling linen and laundry, routine practices are sufficient. Should additional measures be necessary, this information will be communicated broadly at the time of a pandemic.

2.11 Changes in program delivery or closures

Childcare centres may need to change services or close during a pandemic for the following reasons:

- Childcare centres may be asked to close by Toronto Public Health to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Individual childcare centres may close if caregiver-to-child ratios fall below legislative requirements.
- Program delivery in childcare centres located in long-term care homes may be affected by virus activity or restrictions placed on the home.

Childcare centres should identify situations that would affect their operation and determine what events would require them to move to an alternative site, combine operations with another childcare centre, or close. Although most childcare centres offer full-day childcare, many agencies offer part-day or drop-in programs. Depending on what each centre offers, the operational response may vary from centre to centre.

3.0 Planning Checklist

3.1 Planning checklist - short version

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No	Comments
Does your centre have an emergency plan?		
Have you made your employees aware of emergency response plans?		
Have you identified which tasks and positions would be essential during an emergency?		
Have you considered alternative strategies on how to continue service delivery when normal methods are disrupted?		
Have you developed a service continuity plan for your centre for decreasing or altering the services that you offer?		
Have you considered how to keep your centre operational with a large number of staff ill and unable to work?		
Do you have a mechanism to monitor increases in staff absenteeism?		
Have you considered how to deal with employees who report to work ill?		
Do you know where to get up-to-date and accurate information about the pandemic?		
Have you trained your employees on proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette?		
Is your cleaning staff aware of proper disinfecting techniques during a pandemic?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No	Comments
Have you considered stockpiling necessary supplies?		
In case of a death on-site, do you know who to contact (ambulance, coroner, funeral home)?		
Have you considered how you would communicate information to your staff and parents in an efficient manner?		
Have you considered how you would provide your staff with support and counseling?		

3.2 Planning checklist - long version

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
-----------------	---------------------------------------	--

Activation/Termination of Pandemic Response Plan

Who has responsibility for activating the service continuity plan for your centre and who is that person's back-up?		
Has your centre identified a process through which the decision will be made to activate and terminate the plan?		
Do you have a communication strategy for reaching employees and service partners as a result of having to implement any section of the service continuity plan?		

Decision-making and Reporting

Who needs to approve the Pandemic Response Plan?		
Who is identified as being in charge in the event of a pandemic and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined?		
Who makes what decisions?		

Agencies and Stakeholder Communications

Do you have a list of all relevant agencies and stakeholders and their contact information?		
Who notifies the various stakeholders?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
-----------------	---------------------------------------	--

Communications with Staff and the General Public

Who will be responsible for communicating to the employees in your centre and who is their back up person(s) to assume this responsibility?		
Have you prepared site-specific notification for closures and contacts for the public?		
Who will be responsible for communicating with the general public?		
How will reduction/temporary termination of regular services be communicated to local stakeholders and the public?		
Who has authority to issue public service announcements/news releases and who is their alternate?		
How fast can these announcements be produced and approved?		
If mail service is interrupted, is there critical mail delivery which you need to make alternative arrangements for?		
<p>Do you know where to get up-to-date and accurate information about the virus and the pandemic?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vaccine and antiviral medications information ▪ Infection control ▪ Personal care ▪ Public health measures 		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
------------------------	--	---

Planning

Who is in charge in the event of a pandemic episode and are the roles of the various stakeholders clearly defined? Who makes what decisions? Who notifies the various stakeholders?		
Who do you need input from both internally and externally to prepare and review a service continuity plan for your centre? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Elected officials • Legal counsel • Community partners • Labour unions and bargaining agents 		
Who needs to approve the service continuity plan?		
Is the pandemic service continuity plan integrated with your emergency preparedness plan(s)?		
Is your centre's service continuity plan integrated with the City of Toronto's Emergency Plan and Toronto Public Health Pandemic Plan?		
What is the staff capacity and are there provisions to bring in additional staff or volunteers?		
Have you identified the key services that must be provided? (Note: consider minor to major lack of availability of staff due to illness)		
Has your centre identified possible key functions, staff positions, and supplies for each key service?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
-----------------	---------------------------------------	--

Testing of the Plan

How will you test and/or evaluate your service continuity plan?		
How will you test your communication systems, e.g., fan-out?		

Training and Orientation

<p>What are your training needs for staff and external stakeholders regarding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • infection control measures? • environmental cleaning? • equipment use? • review of your centre’s service continuity plan, including explanation of roles and responsibilities? 		
What additional training will volunteers and reassigned staff require?		

Educational Materials

Have educational materials been prepared?		
Have public education efforts been planned?		

Human Resources

Is there a list of all employees, complete with telephone numbers (home and business) and job titles (including those recently retired)?		
Does your centre maintain a fan-out list to contact employees?		
Is there a contact list of all senior staff within your centre?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
If public transit becomes a problem, can employees arrange alternate forms of transportation to work, e.g., carpooling?		
Has your centre addressed the issue of staff being unable to report to work due to possible school and daycare closures?		
Do you currently have adequate staffing for regular day-to-day function?		
Do you have a mechanism to monitor increases in staff absenteeism?		
Has your centre prepared an inventory of skills and professional competencies in the event that people from your agency are required to perform duties/ functions in other areas to maintain essential services?		
How has your agency planned to maintain the employee payroll?		
<i>Health and Safety</i>		
Is there a copy of the Health and Safety manual on site in your centre?		
Have insurance and union issues been addressed?		
Has an inventory been prepared for specialized equipment/facilities that may be needed during a pandemic?		
Have liability issues been addressed for volunteers and re-assigned staff?		
Have support care services been planned for employees? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychosocial support • Grief counselling 		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
-----------------	---------------------------------------	--

Materials and Supplies

Are there clearly stated policies and procedures that cover signing authority and acquisitions?		
Is there a mechanism that will ensure that additional equipment (e.g., cell phones, refrigerators, etc.) can be obtained with minimum delay?		
Who has authority for ordering repair/replacement for equipment and who is their alternate?		
Have you considered developing a 6-8-week stockpile of critical supplies required to maintain your “must do” services, and stockpile of infection control supplies (e.g., alcohol-based hand sanitizers, tissues)?		
Does your centre have contact lists for all your suppliers and alternate suppliers?		
Has a recovery phase been planned for (e.g., depleted supplies or backlogs)?		

Documentation and Record Keeping

Has your centre developed appropriate record keeping procedures for such items as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • complaints and issues raised • significant decisions that were made • regular reporting to provincial/federal governments as required 		
Are there people in your centre who have sole access to incoming information (e.g., reports, complaints, etc.) and who are their alternates?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
-----------------	---------------------------------------	--

Information and Technology

Does your centre maintain a central inventory of passwords to office equipment and electronic files?		
If your information and technology person is ill, who is their alternate?		
Does your centre have access to inventory (including serial numbers) of all computer equipment, printers, fax machines, photocopiers in case repairs are needed?		
Does your centre have contact lists for all equipment repair persons?		
Does your centre have the staff and equipment for a website/telephone call-in line to update staff and parents?		

Facilities

Could any of the centre's services be provided from another work location or from home?		
If necessary, could staff live at the work location or alternative work location for some period of time?		
Who is your security contact should there be a problem with physical access to your work location and who is their alternate?		
How are courier packages generally sent out and received?		

Planning Issues	Completed Yes/No/Not Applicable	COMMENTS Document who is responsible for each action and the decision-making process
-----------------	---------------------------------------	--

Procurement of Additional Resources

Who has the responsibility for procurement matters (e.g., ordering resources and/or equipment) during a pandemic?		
Who will be responsible for payment issues related to overtime and/or additional salary issues and who is their alternate?		
Who has the authority to hire contract/temporary workers and to take on volunteers and who is their alternate?		
Is there a pre-approval process in place for purchasing additional supplies? If not, how long does it take for the approval process?		

Post Pandemic

What are the immediate lessons learned from the previous wave when planning for multiple pandemic waves?		
Who will be responsible for evaluating your response to the pandemic?		
What factors should be included in the evaluation?		
Who will have the authority to notify the various employees, parents and stakeholders regarding the centre's return to full service?		
Who will decide to reinstate full service?		