

Physical Distancing in Toronto Home Child Care Settings - COVID-19

Policy Statement

Toronto Early Learning & Child Care Services (TELCCS) is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children, families, providers and visitors. TELCCS will take every reasonable precaution to prevent the risk of communicable diseases within our home child care locations.

Purpose

To ensure that all providers and visitors are aware of and adhere to the directive established by Toronto Public Health (TPH), and Children's Services regarding physical distancing in TELCCS home child care (HCC) environments.

Application

This policy applies to all families, providers, visitors and community members and any others persons engaged in business with TELCCS HCC.

Definitions

Physical distancing means keeping our distance from one another by staying at least 2 metres (or 6 feet) away from others, as much as possible. This means making changes in everyday routines and activities in order to minimize contact with others. Physical distancing is sometimes referred to as Social Distancing. Physical distancing must not compromise supervision or child safety.

Procedure

By making a conscious effort to keep a physical distance between each other, we can slow the spread of COVID-19. Physical distancing is proven to be one of the most effective ways to reduce the spread of illness during an outbreak. Everyone has a role to play. This means making changes in everyday routines in order to minimize close contact with others.

The concept of physical distancing is new to everyone, especially the children, and we need constant messaging in various ways to act as reminders. Help younger children learn about physical distancing and less physical contact by creating games that include basic principles such as "two arm lengths apart". Regularly remind children to keep "Hands to yourself".

Suggestions for Physical Distancing in a Home Child Care Setting

General

- When planning with the families have staggered arrival and departure times for the children to avoid crowding in the entrance area.
- Encourage children to greet each other using non-physical gestures (e.g., wave or nod or a verbal “Hello”). Close greetings must not occur (e.g., hugs, handshakes).
- Use visual and physical barriers to increase the physical distance between the provider, residents and families. This may include tape markings, pylons, flags, posters and tables/chairs blocking walking paths.
- Use visual markings to increase physical distancing while families are waiting outside of the home for drop off / pick up of the child.

Play Room Area

- Position play areas to increase distancing and to create purposeful movement either toward or away from specific areas.
- Room arrangements should be fluid. Adjust to what is observed with the children's movements once the programming starts and adjust to continually create flow of movement and play areas away from each other. Also, consider the use of visual guides/aids (e.g., different coloured tape) to help encourage the direction or flow of movement.
- Organize children into smaller groups and spread children out to minimize direct physical contact.
- Use different room configurations:
 - Separate the tables
 - Remove excess chairs
 - Markings on tables, such as tape marking play areas or to divide a large table
 - Have specific chairs / seating for each child
- Set up environments to reduce the number of children in a group, for example, set up 2 or 3 areas for colouring or doing crafts.
- Use plastic coverings or push shelving units together to block access as applicable.
- Remove toys that encourage group play in close proximity or increase the likelihood of physical contact.
- Incorporate more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children and the provider.
- Select enough items only for the limited children in the home.
- Ensure physical distancing while children are dressing and in cubby area.
- Encouraging outdoor play can support physical distancing.

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- During outdoor play or indoor gross motor play, significantly reduce the number of play items available and ensure that play areas are set up with physical distancing in mind.
- Encourage children to practice physical distancing while playing.

Rest time

- Position sleeping cots for maximum distancing (2m/6ft).
- Adjust room layout for wake play time for daytime naps in order to achieve appropriate distancing of cots (particularly in small rooms).
- Attempt to place barriers between cots where 2m/6ft is not achievable.
- Children must be placed in a sleeping arrangement where they are distanced and head to toe or toe to toe.
- Place an identifier on the cot to indicate where the child's head/pillow should be placed.
- Cribs should be arranged such that open rails are not close to other open rails even if on a diagonal angle.

Mealtime

- If necessary, stagger snack or meal time to allow spacing between children during meals.
- All food items should be served by the provider to encourage physical distancing between children.
- Ensure that provider and children practice hand hygiene before and after meal times and snacks.

Policy and Procedure Review

This policy and procedure will be reviewed and signed off by all HCC visitors and providers before receiving children at each HCC location, and at any time where a change is made.

Revised: July 7, 2020