

January 13, 2022

Dear Parents and Guardians,

On behalf of Algoma Public Health (APH), we would like to provide you with some important updates.

We understand that these updates may bring some questions, and mixed feelings for parents and guardians. APH has been working with child care centres across Algoma to prepare for their safe operation.

Some important reminders for parents and guardians include:

1. Complete daily screening

- All parents/guardians **must** screen their child **daily** using the [COVID-19 school and Child Care screening tool](#) to assess for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 before attending child care.
- Regardless of vaccine status, do not send your child to child care or any activities if they have symptoms of illness.
- If your child is experiencing any symptoms, follow this [flow chart](#) to determine if your child's symptoms are consistent with COVID-19 and if your child and household members are required to self-isolate. Children are not eligible for PCR testing at the assessment centre. Follow the [Algoma COVID-19: Case and Contact Guide](#) for further information.

2. Get back to basic public health measures & stay home if sick

- It is important to be **diligent with basic public health measures in and outside the classroom** to reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. These measures include wearing a mask, physical distancing, washing your hands, cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces, screening daily and stay home when feeling unwell.
- Reduce the number of contacts your child has outside of child care, especially informal gatherings where public health measures may not be in place. Social events like family get-togethers, play dates, and activities with other families are spreading the virus. When a child passes it on to other children, more schools and child care settings are impacted. No one should attend a gathering or activity if they have any symptoms.

3. Get vaccinated against COVID-19

- COVID-19 vaccines are safe, effective and the best way to protect you and those around you from serious illness, hospitalization and death, from COVID-19 and the highly transmissible Omicron variant of concern.
- APH strongly encourages all individuals **five years of age and older** to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with at least two doses of vaccine, and a third dose, if eligible (18+ years).
- Visit [COVID-19 Vaccine: Children-aged-5-11](#) to learn more about the COVID-19 vaccine for kids, and visit [Covid-19 Vaccine Clinics in Algoma](#) to find an upcoming clinic near you.

Update: Case and Contact Management Changes for Schools and Child Care Settings

On Thursday, December 30, 2021, the [provincial government announced](#) updates to COVID-19 case, contact and outbreak management so public health efforts can be focused on highest risk settings to protect our most vulnerable residents (e.g., long-term care, hospitals, etc.). These changes have implications for how case and contact management is done in the child care centre.

Changes that affect you and your child include:

- You are no longer required to report your child's positive COVID-19 test to the child care centre. If your child tests positive on a take home Rapid Antigen Test or PCR collection kit, please keep your child home from child care and follow the guidance provided in the [Algoma COVID-19: Case and Contact Guide](#).
- Due to changes in testing eligibility and reporting, child care centres are not required to notify children in classes with a positive case, or absences related to symptoms of COVID-19. APH will no longer be dismissing cohorts in child care centres. Any dismissals will be based on operational requirements determined by the child care operator. Classes will continue operating with public health measures in place to help prevent transmission between staff and children.
- To monitor the COVID-19 situation in child care centres, absenteeism rates will be tracked and submitted to APH. If absenteeism significantly rises above a centre's baseline rate, APH will work with the child care centre to notify the child care community.
- Each child care centre has infection prevention and control measures in place to operate as safely as possible. Please continue to follow policies and procedures implemented by your child care centre.

To help you with the various scenarios that may arise, should your child have symptoms of COVID-19, test positive for Covid-19 or is identified by a friend or family member as a close contact, please follow the guidance provided in the [Algoma COVID-19: Case and Contact Guide](#) to identify next steps.

Due to every staff, parent and guardian's efforts to date, child care centres have not been a significant source of COVID-19 transmission in Ontario or Algoma.

Thank you for your ongoing cooperation to support children's wellbeing throughout this pandemic.

Sincerely,

Algoma Public Health