

Workplace Sanitary Standards Guide for Childcare Services – COVID-19

OHS is everyone's business!



The purpose of this guide is to support businesses in the childcare sector for management of OHS in their work environment. It seeks to guarantee that operations can resume or continue under the safest and healthiest possible conditions in the context of COVID-19.

The information contained in this Guide is taken from the interim recommendations produced by the Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail (RSPSAT) and the Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) and specifies the CNESST's expectations in relation to [these recommendations](#). It seeks to guarantee that the activities can resume or continue under the safest and healthiest conditions in the context of COVID-19.

In a crisis period, it is important that workers, employers and other players in the workplace collaborate to have healthy and safe work environments for all! Dialogue and cooperation are essential to achieve this.



Management of occupational health and safety

Management means implementing the necessary measures to honour the employer's legal obligations, namely identify, correct and control the risks and encourage the workers' participation in this preventive approach.

Good cooperation between the employer and the staff is essential to encourage management of OHS.



The employer must **proceed with identification of the risks of transmission of COVID-19 in the work environment**. If the risks of contamination cannot be eliminated, the employer must seek to reduce and control them. The employer must identify the tasks during which workers may be exposed to the virus. The suppliers, subcontractors, partners and customers have been informed of the measures implemented in the company to control the risks associated with COVID-19 and made aware of the importance of complying with these measures.

The preventive measures that may be applied are based on the principles of exclusion of symptomatic persons from the childcare facility, physical distancing, hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and maintenance of hygiene measures for the tools, equipment and frequently touched surfaces.

The COVID-19 context can be a major stress factor, whether for the employer or for the workers, suppliers, subcontractors, partners and parents, due to the upheaval it causes in the different spheres of society. Special attention must therefore be paid to the psychosocial health of the staff.



Exclusion of symptomatic workers from the workplace

Persons exhibiting symptoms are part of the COVID-19 transmission chain in the workplace. Procedures accounting for the following factors can avoid transmission of the disease:

- Identification of workers with COVID-19 symptoms before they enter the workplace, by means such as:
 - a questionnaire,
 - self-evaluation by the workers;

The answers to these questions are confidential information. The employer must take the necessary measures to protect the confidentiality of this information;

- Posters are installed as reminders of the importance of hand hygiene, respiratory etiquette and physical distancing at key locations (entrance, rooms, washrooms, exterior doors, etc.);
- The parents, subcontractors and partners have been informed of the measures implemented in childcare facilities to control the risks associated with COVID-19 and make them aware of the importance of respecting these measures and limiting their movements within the childcare facility as much as possible;
- Strict triage is instituted on the porch or in the vestibule of the childcare facility for the parent and child;
- Access must be refused to any child who exhibits [symptoms associated with the disease](#). Any persons exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19, as indicated on the [government website](#), must be withdrawn immediately, then call 1-877-644-4545 and follow the instructions they will be given;
- Any person whose home contact exhibits symptoms of COVID-19 or who is under investigation and waiting for test results or who recently was diagnosed with COVID-19 must refer to the [recommendations of the INSPQ](#).

When symptoms associated with COVID-19, as indicated on the [government website](#), appear in the childcare facility:

- A COVID-19 emergency kit prepared in advance must be used and contain at least gloves, procedure masks, protective eyewear, a reclosable bag, an overgarment (smock), and an hydroalcoholic solution with an alcohol concentration of at least 60%;
- A child or staff member exhibiting symptoms associated with COVID-19 must be isolated in a room provided for this purpose. The staff member must wear a procedure mask. Because a symptomatic child or staff member must be removed from the environment, a call to 1-877-644-4545 will allow you to obtain instructions for the symptomatic person and the care environment. The child's parents are notified;
- Only one staff member looks after a child exhibiting symptoms for the time until the parent comes to get the child;
- During supervision of the child, the staff member must wear gloves and an overgarment (smock), as well as a procedure mask and protective eyewear;
- Once a child or a staff member exhibiting symptoms has left, disinfect the room, the surfaces and the objects touched by the child or the staff member with the appropriate products and the required protective equipment¹;
- The staff member must remove the protective equipment safely in the room and dispose of them on site (if a trash can without contact with the hands is available) or in reclosable containers or bags reserved for this purpose, and then dispose of the single-use equipment. The reusable equipment must be disinfected (e.g. protective eyewear, if reusable). They must wash their hands immediately after this;
- After disinfection of the isolation room, wash hands and put on gloves again to disinfect the child's personal area (where the child takes a nap or his/her storage area) and place the child's personal objects (sheet, towel, pillow, comforter, stuffed toy, clothing worn, etc.) in a fabric or plastic bag to wash them and return them to the parents.
- If a case is suspected, the parents of the children in the affected person's group and the staff in contact with the symptomatic child must call 1-877-644-4545 to obtain instructions from the Direction de la santé publique.

1. Resources are available online for more information concerning [cleaning of surfaces](#) or the [recommended disinfectants](#).



Physical distancing

- Whenever possible, a minimum of 2 metres of distancing between people (between adults and with the children) must be maintained at work, from arrival to departure, in the absence of means of protection²;
- This distance must also be maintained during breaks and lunch hour;
- Handshakes and hugs between adults must be avoided;
- The workstations and work methods have been reviewed to comply with 2 metres of physical distancing between adults whenever possible;
- Traffic and interactions between workers are limited.

Adjustments that must be made to limit the risk of transmission when the principles of physical distancing cannot be respected:

In offices, these adjustments are:

- Use of technological means (telework);
- Installation of physical barriers (full partitions) between different workstations when they are too close or cannot be spaced;

In childcare services, these adjustments are as follows:

- measures must be taken to encourage physical distancing between adults;
- groups of children and work teams are organized to limit exchanges and contacts as much as possible between cohorts;
- If possible, keep the same children in the same educator-child tandem, and an educator should have the same group of children, particularly by the creation of cohorts;
- If possible, the educators should work in the same facility. Stability of the staff in contact with the children is preferred;
- All staff members in direct contact with children, whose tasks necessitate being less than 2 metres from another person without a physical barrier, must wear respiratory protection and protective eyewear for the duration of contact;
- The necessary personal protective equipment (procedure mask and protective eyewear) must be provided and made available to the personnel in sufficient number;
- When a staff member must wash, feed, rock or hold very young children in their arms, they must:
 - keep long hair tied,
 - wash their hands, neck and any place touched by the child's secretions,

2. Physical distancing does not apply between children in the childcare environment coming from the same bubble, but 1-metre distancing applies with children from other bubbles.

- if there are secretions on the child's clothing, change the clothing,
- deposit the contaminated clothes in bags and close the bags,
- have several changes of clothing within reach in the childcare facility;
- Before leaving the childcare facility, the staff member in contact with the children must:
 - remove the protective eyewear and the procedure mask safely and dispose of the non-reusable equipment in the trash can or in reclosable containers or bags reserved for this purpose, then discard them and disinfect the reusable equipment (protective eyewear, if reusable) with a product adapted to the equipment,
 - whenever possible, remove their protective clothing and dispose of it in a plastic or fabric bag. Wash their clothing worn at work with the usual laundry detergent.



Hand hygiene

Frequent hand washing with lukewarm water and soap or with a hydroalcoholic solution with an alcohol concentration of at least 60% for at least 20 seconds limits the risks of transmission in the work environment, especially:

- before touching the face (eyes, nose, mouth);
- after coughing, sneezing or wiping the nose;
- before and after eating;
- after handling something that is frequently touched;
- when entering and exiting the premises and after each use of collective equipment;
- when removing protective equipment;
- when entering and leaving the childcare facility.

Disposable paper towels and a contactless trash can must also be provided during hand washing with soap and water.

For staff personnel in contact with food, frequent hand washing and compliance with good hygiene and food safety practices are mandatory.

Note: The staff members must also wash their hands after each of these actions with a child (e.g. after wiping a child with a tissue).



Respiratory etiquette

Respecting respiratory etiquette consists of:

- covering your mouth and nose when you cough or sneeze, and using tissues or the crook of your elbow;
- using single-use tissues;
- immediately discarding used tissues in the trash can;
- frequent hand washing;
- not touching your mouth or eyes with your gloved or bare hands.



Maintenance of hygiene measures for material, equipment and frequently touched surfaces

Given that the virus responsible for COVID-19 can live on surfaces, application of hygiene measures is essential:

- Limit sharing of work accessories and equipment (e.g. pens, telephone, tablets, computer mouse);
- Clean and disinfect collective equipment (e.g. telephone, computer, mouse, photocopier, printer) regularly or as soon as more than one person uses it;
- Ensure the efficient operation of the ventilation systems. In the case of mechanical ventilation systems, increase the fresh air intake to the maximum or open the windows to cause fresh air to enter for natural ventilation;
- After each meal, clean the meal areas that are used only by the staff members and disinfect them daily; For example:
 - the refrigerator door handle,
 - chair backs,
 - microwaves;
- Wash the dishes and utensils used by the children and the childcare staff with water and the usual dish soap or dishwasher detergent;
- Immediately clean and disinfect visible dirt (e.g. urine, saliva) and soiled surfaces or objects;
- Clean and disinfect the areas involving frequent contact by the children, with a disinfectant usually used (according to the manufacturer's instructions) depending on the use of the areas and when they are visibly soiled. For example:
 - tables,
 - counters,
 - highchairs,
 - small benches,
 - sanitary facilities,
 - any other relevant location or material;

Resources are available online for more information concerning [cleaning of surfaces](#) or the [recommended disinfectants](#).



Legal obligations

The legal obligations in occupational health and safety, both for the employer and the workers, must be applied in the context of COVID-19. Here is a summary.

Employer

Every employer has the obligation to protect the health and ensure the safety and physical well-being of their workers. The *Act respecting occupational health and safety* (AOHS) requires every employer to take the necessary measures to achieve this ([section 51](#)). To do this, the employer, in particular, must implement methods for the identification, correction and control of risks.

In the context of COVID-19, the employer must ensure that the preventive measures usually implemented are always adapted. Otherwise, he must modify them to protect the workers against the risks of contamination.

The employer must also inform the workers about the risks related to their work, including those related to COVID-19. The employer must also assure the workers of the appropriate training, supervision and coaching so that everyone has the skills and knowledge required to perform the work assigned to them safely.

Worker

Every worker has the obligation to protect their health, safety or physical well-being, and to ensure that they do not endanger the health, safety or physical well-being of other persons found in the workplace ([section 49](#) of the AOHS). To do this, they must comply with the rules and measures implemented in the context of COVID-19 on the same basis as the other rules applied in the work environment. The workers must also participate in the identification and elimination of risks. If they see risks or have suggestions in this regard, they must inform the health and safety committee (if there is one), their superior or a representative of the employer.

Acknowledgments:

- Association paritaire pour la santé et la sécurité du travail du secteur affaires sociales
- Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance
- Centrale des syndicats du Québec
- Confédération des syndicats nationaux
- Conseil québécois des services éducatifs à la petite enfance
- Institut national de santé publique du Québec
- Ministère de la Famille
- Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux
- Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail

The guide and the kit result from a reflective process intended to support the work environments in management of occupational health and safety in the context of COVID-19. The project is scalable and will harmonize with the preventive measures ordered by the Direction de la santé publique (public health authorities).

For more information, we invite you to consult the recommendations of the Réseau de santé publique en santé au travail published on the [Institut national de santé publique](#) website.

Original version in French

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Legal deposit – Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, 2020

Legal deposit – Library and Archives Canada, 2020

ISBN 978-2-550-87621-2 (PDF)

COVID-19 Hotline: 1-877-644-4545

To contact a CNESST inspector: 1-844-838-0808