

Public Health Requirements for Policies and Procedures in Child Care Settings

What are Policies and Procedures?

A **policy** sets out a plan of action on a specific matter. A **procedure** sets out step-by-step instructions as to how a policy will be achieved. Policies and procedures (P&Ps) for a child care setting must be relevant to the setting and accessible to the staff. When developing P&Ps, the child care setting must include detailed instructions as to what is required and identify how staff are responsible for implementing requirements.

Written policies and procedures should be clear, concise and revised regularly to ensure information is up to date and reflects best practice. At a minimum, it is recommended that P&Ps are reviewed on an annual basis and revised as necessary to ensure they are current. Staff working at the child care setting must receive on-going training to ensure that P&Ps are being followed.

Required Policies and Procedures

There are 12 policies and procedures that are required by Public Health for every child care setting. These 12 policies will be reviewed during the routine infection prevention and control (IPAC) audit and will include the following:

1. Health evaluation of children for signs and symptoms of communicable disease
2. Cleaning and disinfection practices
3. Hand hygiene practices
4. Appropriate diapering and toileting practices
5. Prevention of occupationally acquired infections, including surveillance and management
6. Communication with parents and staff with respect to infection prevention and control practices in the child care setting
7. Maintenance of immunization records of children enrolled in the setting and staff working at the setting
8. Required reporting of cases of reportable diseases and outbreaks to the medical officer of health
9. Management of/response to infectious diseases in the child care setting
10. Exclusion of sick children, staff, parents, and/or volunteers
11. Required communication with parents with regard to communicable diseases
12. Management of animals in child care settings

1. Health evaluation of children for signs and symptoms of communicable disease

Child care staff play an important role in identifying early signs and symptoms of illness in children. The goal of this policy is to reduce the spread of infectious pathogens in child care settings. This policy and procedure must include:

- A procedure for the daily observation of children for signs of illness upon arrival at the setting. This will help provide a clearer picture of the baseline rates of illness in the setting
- A procedure outlining who will monitor the daily log of illnesses in the setting
- A procedure for the setting to notify York Region Public Health of any reportable disease or if an outbreak is suspected

2. Cleaning and disinfection practices

Routine cleaning and disinfection of toys, equipment and other surfaces, like diaper change tables, is important to reduce the spread pathogens in the child care setting. This policy and procedure must include the following:

- A procedure to identify the staff member responsible for cleaning and disinfecting
- A policy that includes a disinfection schedule for every program area. This schedule must clearly identify areas that are to be cleaned and disinfected and the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting (i.e., after every use, daily, weekly and/or monthly).
- Information on the type of detergent and/or disinfectants that are to be used on various surfaces. The procedure should clearly identify the proper products to be used, required contact times, proper dispensing and usage
- Information on how and when the product is to be used. The procedure should outline the need to follow the manufacturer's instructions and to adhere to the "Proper Cleaning and Disinfection Practices" chart
- A procedure for cleaning and disinfection levels required and frequency for all equipment, furniture, surfaces, toys, sensory and water play tables and any item that is used in the child care setting
- A procedure for the cleaning and disinfection of blood and body fluid spills

3. Hand hygiene practices

The purpose of hand hygiene is to remove or kill pathogens on the hands. Hand hygiene can be accomplished using soap and running water or an alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR). Handwashing with soap and water is the preferred method for hand hygiene; however, if soap and water are unavailable, ABHR containing 60 to 90 per cent alcohol can be used, only if hands are not visibly soiled. The child care setting must have a policy and procedure for staff and children on hand hygiene. The policy and procedure must outline the following:

- A procedure on how and when to perform hand hygiene which includes the different methods of hand hygiene (e.g., washing hands with soap and water and ABHR)
- A procedure on the management of product dispensing containers
- A procedure for monitoring hand hygiene compliance

4. Appropriate diapering and toileting practices

Pathogens are everywhere, including body fluids such as urine and stool. Due to their presence, child care providers are at risk of becoming ill if they do not take appropriate precautions during diapering and toileting routines. Inappropriate diapering and toileting practices can also result in an increased spread of disease among children.

To prevent disease transmission, child care providers need to ensure proper infection prevention and control practices are in place for diapering and toileting routines. It is important to have a written policy and procedure that clearly identifies the proper diapering and toileting routines. The policy and procedure must include the following:

- Directions for diapering and toileting to be located in close proximity to a well-equipped handwashing sink
- A description of what routine practices are, and the steps to be taken when there is the potential risk of coming into contact with body fluids
- A procedure on how and when to use disposable gloves
- A procedure for hand hygiene
- A procedure to ensure that the child's hands are washed after each diapering and toileting procedure
- A procedure to identify proper application of personal and communal skin products to prevent cross-contamination
- A procedure to properly clean and disinfect equipment (e.g., diaper change table, change pad, toilet seat insert) after each routine
- A procedure to properly store diapering and toileting supplies (e.g., diapers, diaper wipes, disposable gloves, cleaner, disinfectant, skin care products) to prevent contamination
- A procedure to identify proper handling and disposal of soiled diapers/disposable training pants, to ensure the diaper contents are undisturbed. The policy should include a description of the garbage container used to dispose of soiled diapers/disposable training pants
- A procedure for the proper storage of garbage containers used for soiled diapers/disposable training pants
- A procedure for the cleaning and disinfection levels and frequency of cleaning required for the garbage container
- A procedure for the proper handling of soiled clothing ensuring that soiled clothing is not rinsed and/or washed at the child care setting

Additional requirements to be included in the diapering policy:

- A procedure on the proper set-up of diaper change area (e.g., location and safety concerns) ensuring that only a non-quilted diaper change pad is used and the proper use of disposable paper liner
- If cloth diapers are used at the setting, a procedure for the use of cloth diapers must be included. This is to include information on the cloth diaper service (i.e., name, address and telephone number of cloth diaper service) and method of temporary storage of soiled diapers

Additional requirements to be included in the toileting policy:

- Proper storage of toileting equipment (i.e., toilet seat inserts and potty chairs) to prevent contamination

Ensuring staff follow the instructions outlined in the policy will reduce the opportunity for the spread of disease in the child care setting.

5. Prevention of occupationally acquired infections, including surveillance and management

When a child care provider helps children in the bathroom, changes diapers, wipes noses, or applies first aid to cuts, there is a potential of coming into direct contact with pathogens that the children might carry. If proper routine practices are not followed, child care providers are at risk of being infected and/or spreading the pathogen throughout the child care setting, possibly resulting in children and other staff members becoming ill. The policy for prevention of occupationally acquired infections should include the following:

- A procedure outlining how to conduct a risk assessment by assessing the potential of exposure to body fluids
- A procedure on how to select the appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect oneself and prevent the spread of illness
- A procedure on to don and doff PPE
- A procedure on when and how hand hygiene must be performed
- A procedure for the ordering and storage of infection prevention related products ensuring that no expired products are in use
- A procedure in place to ensure that an adequate supply of PPE in the appropriate size is on-site and accessible to staff at all times
- A procedure for the observation of symptoms in staff, to provide a picture of the baseline rates of illness in a child care setting
- A policy on staff illness exclusion and a return policy
- A procedure for reporting suspected outbreaks to York Region Public Health

6. Communication with parents and staff with respect to infection prevention and control practices in the child care setting

It is important to ensure that parents and child care staff are aware of the infection prevention and control practices taking place in the child care setting to prevent the spread of illness. A policy and procedure on communication with parents and staff should include:

- A procedure for notifying and communicating with parents on the infection control practices in place to prevent the spread of illness in the setting
- Key messages prepared in advance explaining why prevention is important, how items will be cleaned and disinfected and with what products
- Key messages prepared in advance when additional measures are in place during an outbreak or response to a reportable communicable disease
- A procedure in place to ensure staff are cleaning and disinfecting items either immediately, daily or weekly

7. Maintenance of immunization records of children enrolled and staff

Immunization Records for Children

York Region Public Health requires the child care setting to provide personal and immunization information for the children who attend the setting. Each record will be reviewed by York Region Public Health Immunization Services to ensure children have received all age-appropriate immunizations. The policy for the maintenance of immunization records should include the following:

- A procedure for the collecting of and storage of immunization records for new admissions to the setting in a safe, locked location
- A procedure for ensuring that children are up-to-date on immunizations according to the Ontario Immunization Schedule, unless written exemption (i.e., medical reason or conscientious or religious reason) is provided
- A procedure for communication with parents about providing the most up-to-date immunization information to the setting
- A procedure in place to request that parents provide new immunization information as it becomes available

Immunization Records for Staff

Every operator of a child care setting should ensure that, before commencing employment, each person employed in the child care setting has had a health assessment and immunization as recommended by the local medical officer of health. For this reason, the policy must include:

- A request for prospective staff members to submit immunization records at the time of hiring
- A procedure for ensuring all staff to provide the most up-to-date immunization information. If due to medical reasons or conscientious or religious reasons, the staff member is not immunized as recommended by Public Health, the staff member must provide written explanation
- A procedure for the collecting of and storage of immunization records for all staff in a safe, locked location
- A procedure in place to request that staff provide new immunization information as it becomes available

8. Required reporting of cases and outbreaks of reportable diseases to the medical officer of health

All child care settings are required to report a suspected outbreak to their local public health unit. This requirement is outlined in the *Health Protection and Promotion Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.H.7, Regulation 559/91*. Child care settings must develop and maintain written policies and procedures in preparation for responding to infectious disease outbreaks. The implementation of outbreak infection control measures such as adequate hand hygiene and exclusion of symptomatic children and staff, will help to reduce the impact of the outbreak in the setting by decreasing the number of children and staff affected as well as shorten the duration of the outbreak. The following information must be included in the policy:

- Surveillance: provide daily surveillance of symptoms in the children and staff in order to identify cases and potential outbreaks. Having a definition of an enteric outbreak in the policy will assist in identifying an outbreak
- To report a suspected outbreak, notify York Region Public Health by calling the Control of Infectious Disease Division Monday to Friday, between 8:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. 905-830-4444 ext. 73588. After hours, including weekends and holidays 905-953-6478

9. Management of/response to infectious diseases in the child care setting

Child care settings should report all outbreaks and reportable diseases to York Region Public Health. A policy on the management and response to infectious diseases should include:

- A procedure to identify the requirements for a child care setting when there is a case of a confirmed reportable disease in the child care setting
- A procedure for when an outbreak is declared outlining how the child care providers will assist public health to identify source of the outbreak
- A procedure for the completion of the Enteric Outbreak Line Listing form provided by Public Health. This includes the addition of new information to the Line List as it becomes available
- A procedure for the implementation of control measures (e.g., increase frequency for cleaning and disinfecting and stop sensory play activities)
- A policy for the exclusion of ill children/staff that includes what should be communicated to parents/legal guardians on any extra infection prevention and control measures that could be taken at home
- A policy on the exclusion of ill children/staff from the child care setting until they have been symptom-free for 48 hours
- A procedure for the separation of ill children from well children until such time as the child can return home
- A procedure for any additional control measures that could prevent the spread of pathogens in the setting
- A procedure for collecting consent from parents/legal guardians in order to identify the source of an enteric outbreak, it is important to collect stool, water and/or food specimens
- A procedure to communicate with parents/legal guardians and get a consent prior to submission of the sample to the Public Health Ontario laboratory for testing

10. Exclusion of sick children, staff, parents, and/or volunteers

Illness exclusion policies need to be consistently applied to all children, staff and volunteers within the child care setting. The child care setting needs to ensure their illness exclusion policy considers not only the health of the individual child, but the health of the other children as a whole, as well as the health of their staff and volunteers. Each staff and volunteers should understand the importance of illness prevention in their daily practices.

The illness exclusion policy and procedure must outline for both staff (including volunteers) and parents/legal guardians the requirements for children who arrive at the setting and are ill, or who become ill while in care.

An illness exclusion policy should include the following:

- Notification to Public Health of a reportable disease. Ontario Reportable Disease Regulation has a list of diseases that are to be reported to the local medical officer of health (i.e., Public Health). As soon as any child or staff within the setting is diagnosed by a physician with a reportable disease, it is the child care setting's responsibility to notify public health
- Excluding, re-admitting and cohorting ill children and child care staff

- A plan for temporary care if a child develops symptoms during the day. This plan should include the following:
 - o Details about the area where the ill children will be placed and who will be assigned to look after children that may become ill throughout the day
 - o Separation of ill children from well children so as not to spread infection throughout the child care setting
 - o A procedure for contacting a physician or ambulance if a parent or alternate is not available for emergency situation
- A staff exclusion policy should outline when an employee can or cannot come to work, and whether they can work with children while at the setting. Upon employment staff must be advised of the exclusion policy and the operator of the child care setting must ensure it is followed. Staff should be retrained on this policy at least annually
- A procedure that identifies the need for illnesses to be recorded on a daily basis

11. Required communication with parents with regard to communicable diseases

When a communicable disease is confirmed in the setting, child care settings should have a policy and procedure to notify parents of the setting about the communicable disease.

The policy must outline:

- A plan for child care settings to communicate with parents/legal guardians when:
 - o A communicable disease is confirmed in the setting
 - o An outbreak is declared by Public Health
 - o A Public Health notification is received regarding to communicable disease in the community
- A procedure for notifying and communicating with parents with regard to communicable diseases
- A procedure for notifying and communicating with parents on the infection control practices in place to prevent and control the spread of illness in the setting
- Key messages prepared explaining why prevention is important, how items will be cleaned and disinfected and with what products
- Key messages prepared when additional measures are in place during an outbreak or in response to a reportable communicable disease

12. Management of animals in the child care setting

If animals are a regular part of the child care setting's activities there should be written infection prevention and control policies and procedures that refer to both visiting animals and animals that reside in the facility. The policies and procedures should be setting-specific and developed in consultation with York Region Public Health. A policy on animals in the child care setting should include:

- A policy and procedure for consultation with parents/legal guardians to determine if circumstances exist (e.g., allergies, phobias or asthma) that would prevent children from interacting with animals in the setting
- Documentation of a health management plan for all visiting and resident animals, including records of annual examination by a licensed veterinarian, dental care, vaccination and prevention of parasites

- A procedure for requesting proof of animal health documentation for visiting animals
- A procedure for recording proof of up-to-date rabies vaccination of dogs, cats and ferrets kept on the premises
- A procedure to ensure a plan for the education of staff and children on IPAC measures related to animals or animal food and treats. Educate children to avoid kissing animals, always perform hand hygiene after touching animals or the animal's toys, bedding, food bowls, etc.
- Child care setting operators should pay particular attention on activities involving young children less than five years of age as they are more susceptible to illness
- A procedure for ensuring that children are monitored and supervised by an adult while washing their hands or if using alcohol-based hand rubs (ABHR) after animal contact
- A written animal bite/scratch protocol that includes details of the incident, first aid practices and reporting to public health, child's parents/guardians
- A procedure for storing animal food and treats off the floor, in a latched cupboard and kept away from where human food is stored, prepared, served
- A procedure for when animal related substances such as urine, feces, vomit and/or blood must be contained, cleaned and disinfected

All policies and procedures need to be easily accessible and available to staff at all times, (e.g., copies of the P&P binder are provided in each program area/classroom). Policies and procedures must be updated regularly when information becomes available or if new legislation comes into place or current legislation is amended. It is responsibility of the owner/operator of the child care setting to ensure that all staff are trained and follow all policies and procedures to ensure a safe and healthy environment within a child care setting.

For more information refer to *A Public Health Guide For Child Care Providers* at york.ca/childcareguide

Please note that additional public health measures may be advised during an outbreak or pandemic by YRPH and the Ministry of Education.