



## VANCOUVER CHILD STUDY CENTRE - COVID-19 PROTOCOLS AND POLICY

### RESOURCES FOR CHILD CARE OPERATORS

In order to comply with the necessary safety protocols surrounding Covid-19, VCSC has consulted the BC Center for Disease Control Guidelines for Schools/Childcare Settings and are regularly in communication with Vancouver Coastal Health to receive any updates on safety protocols for childcare settings. The latest guidance can be found on the BC CDC website:

[COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings](#)

Any updated recommendations by BC Centre for Disease Control and Ministry of Health will set precedence over the protocols and policy in this document.

### What we know about COVID-19 in children (source: BC Centre for Disease Control)

- Children are at a low risk of catching and spreading COVID-19. In B.C.
- Children and youth typically have much milder symptoms of COVID-19
- Clusters and outbreaks involving children and youth are unusual and tend only to occur in areas where there are high levels of community spread
- For younger children maintaining physical distance is less practical and the focus should be on minimizing direct physical contact instead

### ILLNESS AND SELF-ISOLATION

#### Staff:

Staff are not permitted to come into work if they fall into the following categories:

- Anyone with COVID-19 symptoms;
- Staff who have travelled internationally;
- Staff who live in a household with or is a close contact of someone who is COVID-19 positive

#### Children and Family Members:

Children and family members are not permitted to enter the school if they fall into the following categories:

- Children and family members with COVID-19 symptoms;
- Children and family members who have travelled internationally;
- Children and family members who live in a household with or are a close contact of someone who is COVID-19 positive



**Please note:** All families will need to inform VCSC of international travel and failure to do so could result in an immediate dismissal from our program.

### **Self-isolation Guidelines:**

- All families traveling outside of Canada will be asked to remain home for 14 days upon return and will need to be symptom free for 14 days before returning to class
- Travelers who develop symptoms of COVID-19 during the self-isolation period should go for testing, but will still be required to complete their 14 days of self-isolation if they test negative
- If your child lives with anyone that is a confirmed COVID-19 case they will need to self-isolate and not return to class until approved by public health
- If told by public health or a health care provider that you or your child is a close contact of a COVID-19 case, self-isolation is required for 14 days from the day of last contact, even if you are subsequently tested and have negative COVID-19 test result
- Any child, staff or family members that show any COVID-19 symptoms must stay at home until symptoms have been resolved or has been assessed by a health care provider to exclude COVID-19 and are fit to return to school
- Please note that exceptions can be made for staff and children experiencing seasonal allergies that have been diagnosed by a physician. If a child has any of the symptoms above with an underlying reason such as seasonal allergies, they must provide a letter from their physician identifying the symptoms, underlying cause and medical care that is given prior to attending VCSC

### **SOCIAL AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING**

Based on the current epidemiology of COVID-19 in B.C., and the fact that children are at a much lower risk of developing COVID-19, public health guidelines for young children differ from that of adults.

#### **Children and Environment:**

Physical distancing of 2 meters is not an expectation among children in a child care setting where risk of transmission is low. Instead, health officers emphasize the importance of minimizing direct physical contact (e.g., hugs and handshakes). VCSC has adopted the following protocols to encourage children to spread out and minimize direct physical contact

- Staff will teach and encourage children to avoid direct physical contact (“hands to yourself”) and practice appropriate distancing (“two arm lengths apart) through games and songs
- The Ministry encourages time outside and asserts that outdoor playgrounds are a safe environment for children to play together; emphasis will be placed on minimizing direct physical contact between children and proper hand hygiene before and after play



- Where possible, activities and provocations will be thoughtfully set up for individual play, for smaller groups, or created outside
- Equipment and learning materials will be limited to those that can be easily cleaned
- VCSC will have a designated area for children who may develop symptoms of illness during class until they can be picked up
- VCSC will continue to have a teacher to student ratio of 1:6 to ensure increased supervision of children

#### **Staff:**

- Staff will maintain a distance of 2 metres from one another (and other adults) and minimize direct physical contact with children
- If staff are required to be in direct physical contact with children (e.g., to wipe body fluids) gloves and a face covering must be worn
- While our staff need to be conscious of good hygiene practices and are well-trained in COVID-19 safety measures, they are keenly aware of their role in providing care and attention to students

#### **PICK UP AND DROP OFF**

- Pick-up and drop-off of preschool children will occur outside
- Parents will be asked to sanitize their hands before signing the the sign-in/ sign-out sheet
- Drop-off times will be staggered and families will need to maintain 2m physical distance with other families
- Everyone will be asked to conduct a daily health check at home prior to coming to VCSC, and asked to provide a verbal health declaration upon arrival
- All clothing items should be laundered before being worn to class
- Children will be asked to change their shoes upon arrival, and outdoor shoes will be left in the child's assigned cubby
- Accommodations will be made during the gradual entry period for children who are not ready for drop-off alone; however, we ask that parents wear a mask, use hand sanitizer before entering and keep a safe distance from anyone who is not your child
- Please leave non-participating siblings and other family members at home

#### **FACE MASKS AND OTHER PPE**

- Staff are wearing masks at all times during class
- Staff will wear disposable gloves and face coverings when cleaning body fluids (e.g., runny nose, vomit, stool, urine)
- Masks are required for any adult entering the building
- Masks are not recommended for use by children under the age of 10 and can be irritating or lead to increased touching of the face and eyes
- VCSC respects the individual choice for a parent to send their child in a mask; however, staff will not be responsible for ensuring the child is wearing the mask correctly at all times



## **ADDITIONAL CLEANING AND HYGIENE**

### **Daily Cleaning and Disinfecting**

Regular cleaning and disinfecting are essential to preventing the transmission of COVID-19 from contaminated objects and surfaces. School settings will be cleaned and disinfected in accordance with the BCCDC's Cleaning and Disinfecting in a Childcare Setting.

- General cleaning and disinfecting of the area will occur at least once a day.
- Frequently-touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, faucet handles) i
- Toys that have been in contact with body fluids (mouth, nose, etc.) will be immediately put into a separate bin until they can be properly sanitized

### **Handwashing**

Staff will encourage proper and frequent hand washing with the children including:

- Ensuring hand washing upon entry and during every transition such as washroom, art, play time, before and after snacks
- Using social stories, illustrated diagrams, and direct teacher instruction with children to promote healthy hand washing habits and respiratory etiquette
- VCSC asks that parents also reinforce proper and frequent hand hygiene with their children at home

## **FOOD SAFETY AND SNACKS**

- To avoid direct physical contact and cross-contamination, snack preparation and communal snack service will be suspended (along with snack fees)
- Parents are asked to pack their child's snack and water in containers the child can open independently that are clearly labeled with the child's name and that; please send these items in a separate lunch bag that is clearly labeled with the child's name

## **CASE FINDING, CONTACT TRACING AND OUTBREAK MANAGEMENT**

- Active testing of people with mild COVID-19 like symptoms (case finding) helps identify cases early in the course of their disease, determine whether others in close contact with them are at risk for infection (contact tracing), and ensure they get appropriate care and follow-up.
- If a staff or student in a school is confirmed by public health as positive for COVID-19, public health determines what actions should be taken, including if any staff or students who have been in contact with that person need to self-isolate, and if other staff and students' families should be notified



- As a licensed child care facility, VCSC works closely with a designated Vancouver Coastal Health licensing officer to ensure that we have the proper policies and procedures in place for reporting any elevated absenteeism due to illness, to help with early identification of a potential cluster.
- Please refer to the BCCDC Guidance document for further information about notification protocols

### **A NON-BIASED, INCLUSIVE APPROACH**

Fear-based responses in times of pandemic or communicable disease, have historically led to actions stemming from bias and self-protective measures. Not only can these measures lead to conflict between parents, child care educators, and community members, but they can also lead to actions rooted in prejudice and bigotry. Vancouver Child Study Centre has an inclusive-based approach and works to be a safe space for all families and children; we will not tolerate acts of prejudice towards any parent, child, employee, or community member. Any such acts are subject to an immediate dismissal from our program.

### **PROVINCIAL GUIDELINES AND PRECEDENCE**

Vancouver Child Study Centre (VCSC) is licensed and regulated through the Ministry of Health, Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and Child Care Facilities Licensing. VCSC may be directed by the Ministry or by a Vancouver Coastal Health Child Care Licensing Officer to close operations during a pandemic or other communicable disease outbreak.

VCSC will follow all directives and guidelines provided by the Ministry of Health. The legal authority to close a childcare program for public health reasons falls under the purview of the local Medical Health Officer and the Provincial Health Officer, and their decision overrides any decision that could be made by our board of directors or wishes of VCSC families.

**Please note:** any updated recommendations by BC Centre for Disease Control and Ministry of Health will set precedence. Any temporary changes to VCSC's health and wellness policy during a pandemic / outbreak will be communicated in writing, via email, and will link to the authorized source of information that our change is based on.