

Before and After School Programs Kindergarten – Grade 6

POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOL BOARDS FOR THE 2021-2022 SCHOOL YEAR

Highlights of Changes:

- (p.8-10) Updated guidance on Use of Masks and PPE – masking is not required outdoors when two metres of distance is maintained with others; eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) is required both indoors and outdoors, as per occupational health and safety requirements, for individuals working in close contact with children who are not wearing face protection.

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COVID-19 OPERATIONAL GUIDANCE

INTRODUCTION

This section of the *Before and After School Kindergarten to Grade 6 Policies and Guidelines for School Boards* is intended to provide clarification and best practices to operate before and after school programs with enhanced health and safety guidelines and/or restrictions in place for the 2021-2022 school year due to COVID-19.

To support consistency for children and families, the ministry has revised this guidance document, where possible, to align with the provincial [Guide to reopening Ontario's Schools](#), as well as the information at the [COVID-19 reopening schools webpage](#).

All before and after school programs operated or contracted by the board should follow the health and safety requirements set out by the Ministry of Education for core-school program delivery as well as guidance provided by the school board and local public health unit. Advice of the local public health unit must be followed, even in the event that it conflicts with, or is inconsistent with, this guidance document.

This guidance document is meant to support partners in meeting requirements set out under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) and the [Reopening Ontario \(A flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#), to provide clarification on operating before and after school programs with enhanced health and safety guidelines and/or restrictions in place. The guidance provided has been developed in consultation with the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health and will be modified as applicable when these restrictions can be lifted and/or amended to reflect new advice at the time.

The information found within this guidance document is intended to represent the minimum recommendations of the Ministry of Education. Before and after school program partners may, particularly at the advice of their local public health unit, choose to implement additional measures based on local circumstances.

On September 1, 2020, before and after school programs were permitted to operate using maximum group sizes as set out under the [CCEYA](#) (e.g., licensed age groups prior to the COVID-19 outbreak). All before and after school programs must continue to operate with enhanced health and safety measures in place, including the use of medical masks and eye protection (as required) for all staff/providers.

As always, **the top priority for the ministry is the health and safety of the children and child care staff/providers**. We will monitor the COVID-19 outbreak situation closely and revise this guidance, as needed, in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health.

While the focus of this guidance document is on the health, safety and operational measures that are required in order to operate before and after school program as safely as possible, please note that every effort should continue to be made to uphold the welcoming and caring environment that these programs provide for children and their families. More information regarding the early years pedagogy, including helpful resources can be found on the [ministry website](#). The ministry has created a resource with ideas on how to provide an engaging environment while physically distancing: [Building on How Does Learning Happen?](#)

DUTY TO OPERATE BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Under the *Education Act*, school boards are required to ensure the provision of a before and after school program on every instructional day for every elementary school serving students in the primary and/or junior division where there is sufficient demand and/or viability. (See [DUTY: Provision of Before and After School Care](#) section of this document for more details.) Boards are encouraged to consult with their legal counsel for further guidance about this requirement when the current context requires additional time to ensure that before and after school programs are operational.

DEMAND AND VIABILITY

[The PLANNING: Community Engagement](#) section of this document provides guidance on the integrated approach to the planning and delivery of before and after school programs and required consultation. There is flexibility for school boards, service system managers and community partners to work together to assess viability and demand and develop planning processes that are responsive to the particular qualities and needs of a community.

This section also provides factors for consideration when assessing viability and demand. Additional factors to consider for the reopening may include:

- Availability of qualified staff who have received additional training given enhanced health and safety requirements;
- Shared space considerations, including considering the availability of space on school premises (both indoors and outdoors); and ability to meet enhanced cleaning and disinfection requirements between the core day and before and after school program.

BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS AND GROUPS

The ministry recognizes that in order for before and after school programs to be operational and viable, it may not be possible to limit students in the before and after school program to their cohorts from the core day. The ministry recommends that, in circumstances where students from different school day classes must interact to participate in the before and after school program, boards make efforts to limit interactions between students from different cohorts to the greatest extent possible.

Best practices to limit interactions between students from different cohorts and reduce transmission of COVID-19 may include:

- Making best efforts to group the before and after school program class with the same core day class (e.g. determining core day classes based on whether the child is enrolled in the before and after school program); and
- Making use of large, well-ventilated spaces (e.g. gymnasium) or outdoor spaces as much as possible for the before and after school programs; and
- Maintain up-to-date lists of students in each before and after school program cohort to facilitate timely follow-up should a confirmed case of COVID-19 be identified.

Before and after school programs are also required to follow strict health and safety guidelines, which are equivalent to those in schools.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Before and after school programs are expected to employ multiple strategies and a layering of controls to support healthier and safer environments for children and staff as detailed below. There is not one specific measure that will prevent COVID-19 transmission from occurring in before and after school programs, but rather there are multiple structural and individual elements that contribute to making these healthier spaces and reduce the risk of infection to in-person attendees.

Each of the control measures listed below provides some benefit in reducing spread. However, it is the combination and consistent application of these layered controls as a bundle that is most effective for reducing disease spread in before and after school programs.

All before and after school programs operated or contracted by the board should follow the health and safety requirements set out by the Ministry of Education as well as guidance provided by the school board and local public health unit. School boards should work with providers to establish and coordinate protocols.

Licensed child care operators should also refer to [O. Reg. 137/15](#) and the [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) referred to above for additional health and safety protocols. Extended day programs and programs operated by an authorized recreational and skill building provider should also use the [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) as a resource to support re-opening.

Cleaning and Disinfection

Cleaning Protocols

Existing practices should be reviewed to determine where enhancements might be required, including frequency and timing of cleaning and disinfection, areas to clean and disinfect, choice of cleaning products, and child safety, staffing, signage, and PPE use when cleaning.

Please refer to Public Health Ontario's [Environmental Cleaning fact sheet](#) for best practices for cleaning and disinfecting including:

- which products to use, including disinfectants with Health Canada Drug Identification Numbers (DINs);
- how to clean and disinfect different materials, including minimum surface contact time; and,
- other items to remember, including checking expiry dates of cleaning and disinfectant products and following the manufacturer's instructions.

Health Canada's [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID 19\)](#) webpage provides further information on approved products.

Cleaning Products

Products that provide both cleaning and disinfection action are preferable due to ease of use (for example, hydrogen peroxide products). Only use cleaning and disinfectant products that have a Drug Identification Number (DIN). Check the expiry date of the agents prior to use. These should be used according to the manufacturer's instructions.

Cleaning Program

School boards should develop a program for cleaning and disinfecting schools, including reviews of existing practices to determine where enhancements might be made, including frequency and timing of cleaning and disinfection, areas to clean and/or disinfect, choice of cleaning products, child safety, staffing, signage, and PPE for cleaning staff.

Focus should be on regular hand hygiene to reduce the risk of infection related to high touch surfaces. Cleaning plus disinfection twice daily of high touch surfaces is suggested at a minimum, however, more frequent cleaning and disinfection may be necessary, depending on the frequency of use and extent of soilage.

- Frequently touched surfaces include, but are not limited to, washrooms (for example toilet fixtures, faucets), eating areas (for example, tables, sinks, countertops), doorknobs, light switches, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, touch screens, push buttons, handrails, computers, photocopiers, sports equipment, water fountain knobs.

Providers may consider scheduling outdoor play during the time that the cleaning and disinfecting takes place.

It is recommended that providers keep a cleaning and disinfecting log to track and demonstrate cleaning schedules.

Shared Spaces/Objects

The risk associated with transmission with shared objects is low. Instead of regular cleaning of shared objects, the focus should be on regular hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette to reduce the risk of infection related to shared equipment. This is especially the case for young children where shared equipment is important for learning (for example, toys for imaginative play, manipulatives for math).

Where an individual is suspected of having COVID-19 in the before and after school program setting:

- Establish a protocol to determine contaminated areas and carry out cleaning and disinfection, including timing, when to return to use, methods of cleaning, PPE to be used while cleaning, and waste disposal.
- Identify areas that may require cleaning plus disinfection (items used by the individual and all surfaces within 2 metres of the ill person) versus cleaning alone (such as a hallway or room where the individual has passed through).

Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

Appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette are among the most important protective strategies. Staff, providers, visitors and students on educational placement should be trained and able to assist children on appropriate hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette, including the use of alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR), and reinforcing its use.

Hand hygiene should be conducted by anyone entering the before and after school program setting and incorporated into the daily schedule at regular intervals during the day, above and beyond what is usually recommended (for example, before eating food, after using the washroom).

Staff, providers, visitors, students on educational placement and children should be provided with targeted, age-appropriate education in proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Local public health units can provide additional guidance. Local public health units can provide additional guidance. Age-appropriate posters or signage should be placed around the before and after school program setting.

- Soap and water are preferred as the most effective method and least likely to cause harm if accidentally ingested.
- ABHR can be used by children. It is most effective when hands are not visibly soiled.
- For any dirt, blood, body fluids (urine/feces), it is preferred that hands be washed with soap and water.
- Safe placement of the ABHR to avoid consumption is important, especially for young children.
- Support or modifications should be provided to allow children with special needs to regularly perform hand hygiene as independently as possible.
- Tissues and lined, no-touch waste baskets (for example, foot pedal-operated, hand sensor, open basket) are to be provided where possible.
- ABHR with a minimum 60% alcohol concentration must be available (60-90% recommended, including ideally at the entry point to each room) and/or plain liquid soap in dispensers, sinks and paper towels in dispensers.

Refer to Public Health Ontario's [How to Wash Your Hands \(PDF\)](#) fact sheet and respiratory etiquette infographic.

Refer to Health Canada's [Hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers \(COVID-19\): List of hand sanitizers authorized by Health Canada](#), including which sanitizers may be appropriate for different groups of staff and students.

Guidance on the Use of Masks and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

At the advice of the local public health unit, child cares may choose to implement additional masking measures based on local circumstances.

Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks are expected to be put in place. Exceptions to wearing masks indoors could include situations where a child cannot tolerate wearing a mask, reasonable exemptions for medical conditions, etc.

Providers should ensure their masking exceptions policies support children and staff to wear masks to the greatest extent possible.

Providers may discuss with parents/guardians, in consultation with the child's health care professional, whether other types of face coverings might work for the child.

Providers should consider ways to support nutrition breaks/mask breaks in a safe manner (i.e., a space where staff/providers can maintain at least 2 metres distance to remove masks and eat).

Providers should document their requirements and exemptions related to masks (e.g., within their COVID-19 policy).

Expectations for adults in a before and after school program:

All staff, providers, visitors and students on education placement are required to wear medical masks (e.g., surgical/procedural) while inside the before and after school program, including hallways and staff rooms (unless eating – but time with masks off should be limited and physical distance should be maintained).

Eye protection (e.g., face shield or goggles) is required both indoors and outdoors, as per occupational health and safety requirements for individuals working in close contact with children who are not wearing face protection. Eye protection is not required for individuals working with children who wear face protection.

All staff, providers, visitors and students on educational placement are required to wear medical masks when providing transportation for children. Eye protection for drivers should not interfere with the safe operation of vehicles and is intended to protect drivers during close contact with children, such as during boarding and exiting.

Masking is not required outdoors when two metres of distance is maintained from others. Physical distancing is strongly encouraged between groups.

Expectations for children:

All children in grades 1 and above are required to wear a properly fitted, non-medical or cloth mask while inside, including in hallways.

Students in Kindergarten are encouraged to wear a properly fitted, non-medical or cloth mask while inside including hallways.

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing their child(ren) with a non-medical mask(s) or face covering each day and should be reminded that if children are wearing masks, they will require a way to store their mask when not in use.

Masking is not required outdoors. Physical distancing is strongly encouraged between groups.

Proper use of Masks and PPE:

Refer to [Public Health Ontario resources](#) and the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\) website](#) for how to properly put on and take off masks and eye protection, and how to properly store them when not in use. You may also wish to view a helpful [video](#) on how to properly put on and take off masks and eye protection.

Keep in mind that it may be difficult to put on a mask and eye protection properly (i.e. without contamination) after having removed them, given the frequent and spontaneous need for close interactions with young children in a before and after school program setting. Masks should be replaced when they become damp or visibly soiled.

The use of medical masks and eye protection is for the safety of before and after school program staff/providers and the children in their care. This is especially important when working with individuals who may not be wearing face coverings.

Sourcing PPE:

Providers should secure and sustain an amount of PPE (including but not limited to face shields or goggles, medical masks, gloves, etc.) and cleaning supplies that can support their current and ongoing operations.

A supply of medical masks and eye protection (i.e., face shields) is being procured and delivered through the Ministry of Government and Consumer Services to licensed childcare centres and school boards for staff on a monthly basis.

- A back-up supply of non-medical masks will also be provided for school age children in licensed child care in case they cannot bring one from home.

The Ontario Together Portal has a [Workplace PPE Supplier Directory](#) that lists Ontario businesses that provide PPE and other supplies.

Screening for Symptoms

All individuals entering the premises must self-screen every day before attending the program using the provincial screening tool or a screening tool designated by the local public health unit. The province will continue to provide a [COVID-19 screening tool](#) for use by schools and child care and may update this frequently throughout the year. All individuals must follow the monitoring and isolation advice outlined in the screening tool. Local public health units may designate a commensurate or more restrictive screening tool for local use.

The ministry may direct providers to perform daily on-site confirmation of self-screening, such as during a period of potential higher transmission (e.g., after a holiday period). Before and after school programs are expected to have a process in place to validate the daily self-screening of these individuals prior to or upon their arrival at the premises, if directed to do so. Confirmation or proof of self-screening should be in a form deemed appropriate and accessible by the before and after school program (e.g., proof of completed paper copy of screener, mobile application indicating a “pass”).

Screening for Before and After School Programs

All staff, students on educational placement, and visitors must self screen. Any individuals that do not pass the screening procedures will be asked to remain home and self-isolate. *See the provincial [COVID-19 screening tool](#) for symptom screening, monitoring and isolation procedures.*

- At the advice of the local public health unit, providers may choose to implement additional screening measures based on local circumstances.

Screening for Children

Parents and guardians are required to screen their children for symptoms of illness every day. The provincial [COVID-19 screening tool](#) is available to support parents and guardians to meet this requirement.

- Parents or guardians of any child that has not completed the screening for symptoms prior to arriving at the before and after school program setting will be required to complete screening prior to entry.

- Any child that does not pass the on-site screening procedures will be asked to return home and self-isolate. *See the provincial [COVID-19 screening tool](#) for symptom screening, monitoring and isolation procedures.*

At the advice of the local public health unit, providers may choose to implement additional screening measures based on local circumstances.

General Screening Requirements:

It is the responsibility of the provider to ensure that all screening procedures (including on-site screening) are completed and to ensure that no individual enters the premises unless they have completed the screening and the result of that screening has indicated that they are allowed to proceed.

- Signs should be posted at entrances to remind staff, parents/caregivers, and visitors of screening requirements.
- Providers should make self-assessment tools available to staff to ensure awareness of possible symptoms of COVID-19.

Providers may wish to consult the [Province's COVID-19 website](#) for information and resources on COVID-19 symptoms, protections, and seeking health care.

For screening an individual at the before and after school program setting and escorting children to the program, providers should take appropriate precautions including, maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres from those being screened, being separated by a physical barrier (such as a plexiglass barrier), and providing alcohol-based hand rub containing 60% to 90% alcohol content at all screening stations.

Note: where a provider is participating in the Provincial Antigen Screening Program, these tests are voluntary and subject to the consent of the individual. Ministry staff are not required to participate but may do so to at the request of the provider.

Transportation

All staff, providers and students on educational placement and other adults are required to wear medical masks. Eye protection should be used as per [occupational health and safety requirements](#). Eye protection for drivers should not interfere with the safe operation of vehicles and is intended to protect drivers during close contact, such as during boarding and exiting.

The use of non-medical masks or face covering for children grades 1 and above will be required on vehicles. Children below grade 1 should be encouraged to wear masks on transportation.

- Providers should support accommodations for immunocompromised and otherwise medically vulnerable children, and children with special transportation needs.

Children should be assigned seats and a record of the seating plan should be kept to assist with contact tracing in the case of a child, staff or driver contracting COVID-19. Children who live in the same household should be seated together where possible.

Training, where appropriate, as per occupational health and safety requirements under the [Occupational Health and Safety Act](#), should be provided to ensure that health and safety

measures to protect against COVID-19 are understood, followed and enforced in all transportation settings.

- Vehicles should follow an enhanced cleaning protocol of disinfecting high-touch surfaces (for example, handrails, seatbacks) at least twice daily
- Transportation service providers should also consider the [Health and Safety Guidance During COVID-19 for Student Transportation Employers](#) released by the Public Services Health and Safety Association.

Health and safety measures should be clearly communicated to parents and guardians to ensure their comfort with the adapted transportation system and receive their support in having children understand and follow guidelines.

Attendance Records

In addition to attendance records for students, maintain daily records of anyone entering the premises. These records must include all individuals who enter the premises (e.g., parents and guardians dropping off children, cleaners, people doing maintenance work, people providing supports for children with special needs, those delivering food).

- Records are to be kept on the premises and, along with name and contact information, must include an approximate time of arrival and time of departure, and screening completion for each individual.
- Records must be kept up-to-date and available to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak (i.e., records can be made available to public health within 24 hours of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak).

Monitoring and Responding to Reports of COVID-19 Symptoms

See the provincial [COVID-19 screening tool](#) for symptom screening, monitoring and isolation procedures. All individuals must follow the monitoring and isolation advice outlined in the screening tool.

Persons who test positive for COVID-19 should follow the guidance of their local public health unit and health care professional regarding direction for isolation and returning to a before and after school program setting. The individual cannot return until cleared by their local public health unit. Note that individuals do not need to provide a medical note or proof of negative result to return to the program.

If an individual becomes ill while in the before and after school program setting:

- The ill individual must be immediately separated from others, in a separate room where possible (i.e., an isolation room). Parents/guardians must be contacted for pick-up of symptomatic children.
- Symptomatic children who are separated from others must be supervised.
- Anyone providing care to the ill individual should maintain as much physical distance as possible. If physical distancing is not possible (e.g., if a young child needs comfort) staff/providers should consider additional PPE (i.e., gloves, gown).
- The person caring for the individual must wear a medical mask and eye protection and be trained on proper use of PPE, including donning and doffing.
- If tolerated, the ill individual should also wear a medical mask.

- Hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette should be practiced while the ill individual is waiting to be picked up.
- Cleaning of the area the separated individual was in and other areas of the before and after school program setting where the ill individual was should be conducted as soon as reasonably possible after the ill individual leaves (see above in the Cleaning section).
- The ill individual and/or their parent or guardian should be advised to use the [online self-assessment tool](#) and follow instructions which may include seeking medical advice and/or going for testing for COVID-19.
- Communication protocols to update and inform necessary stakeholders within the school community while maintaining confidentiality of the ill individual should be initiated (e.g., contact the school, service system manager and/or ministry through a Serious Occurrence Report as applicable).
- Regular before and after school program operation can continue unless directed otherwise by the local public health unit.
- An ill individual who has a known alternative diagnosis provided by a health care professional may return to a before and after school program if they do not have a fever and their symptoms have been improving for at least 24 hours.

All child care and early years sector partners, together with Ministry of Health and local Public Health units will work closely to monitor and respond to reports of COVID-19 symptoms.

Reporting and Serious Occurrence Reporting

Where schools have become aware of a confirmed case of COVID-19 (i.e., a positive COVID-19 test result) associated with the school, they are responsible for reporting such a case, to the local Public Health Unit and to the Ministry of Education through the daily reporting tool, as well as associated program closures as applicable.

In addition, licensed before and after school programs operated by a child care licensee should refer to the [Operational Guidance During COVID-19 Outbreak](#) regarding serious occurrence reporting requirements.

Outbreak Management

An outbreak may be declared by the local public health unit when within a 14-day period, there are two or more laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases in children, staff/providers or other visitors with an epidemiological link (e.g., cases in the same room, cases that are part of the same before/after school care cohort) where at least one case could have reasonably acquired their infection in the before and after school program setting.

The local public health unit will work with the before and after school program provider to determine whether epidemiological links exist between cases and whether transmission may have occurred in the before and after school program setting.

- If the local public health unit declares an outbreak, they will determine what happens next. This could include closing before and after school program rooms or cohorts or an entire before and after school program setting.
- The public health unit will help determine which groups of children and/or staff/providers need to be sent home or if a partial or full closure of the before and after school program setting is required.

- If the public health unit determines that partial or full closure of the before and after school program setting is required, the licensee must revise their existing serious occurrence report for a confirmed COVID-19 case to include information about the closure.

ADDITIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY GUIDANCE

The following sections provide guidance and best practices for school boards to consider related to additional health and safety measures. School boards should work with providers to establish and coordinate protocols that align with school board policies and local public health unit advice.

Communication with families regarding the enhancement of health and safety measures facilitates transparency of expectations. New policies should be shared with families for their information and to ensure they are aware of these expectations, including keeping children home when they are sick, which are aimed at helping to keep all children and staff/providers safe and healthy.

Providers must share with parents the policies and procedures regarding health and safety protocols to COVID-19, including requirements and exceptions related to masks.

Pick up and Drop Off Procedures

Develop procedures that support physical distancing and separate groups of students as best as possible – ideally separate entrances and exits (i.e., children of one room enter door A and children of another room enter door B) or staggered entrance times. You may want to review the [Preparedness Checklist](#) developed by Public Health Ontario for school reopening, for helpful considerations.

- Consider using signage/markings on the ground to direct families through the entry steps.

All entrances and exits should have 60%-90 % alcohol-based hand rub with signage demonstrating appropriate use (see How to Wash your Hands) and everyone entering should be encouraged to use the hand rub.

- Alcohol based hand rub should not be accessible to children (i.e., within their reach) and children should be supervised when using the hand rub.
- Personal belongings should be labeled and kept in the child's cubby/designated area (e.g., backpack, clothing, etc.) While appropriate clothing for the weather (e.g., jackets, hats, sunscreen) should continue to come with the child, other personal belongings (e.g., toys) should be minimized.
- If the before and after school program is located off school premises and transportation is being provided by the school board, the school board should work with the provider to explore transportation considerations using relevant health and safety protocols, including the [guidance for student transportation](#).

Space Set-Up and Physical Distancing

Physical distancing between children in a before and after school program can be difficult to maintain; however, it is an important strategy that should be encouraged whenever possible.

It is also important to maintain a welcoming and caring environment for children. Please see the document [Building On How Does Learning Happen?](#) for more support and ideas on how to provide an engaging environment while physically distancing.

More than one child care or early years program or day camp can be offered per building/space as long as they are able to maintain separation between the groups/cohorts and follow all health and safety requirements that apply to those programs. Physical barriers (which begin at the floor and reach a minimum height of 8 feet) are not required if a distance of 2 metres can be maintained between cohorts.

When in the same common space (e.g., entrances, hallways) physical distancing of at least 2 metres should be maintained between different groups and should be encouraged, as much as possible, between children within the same group by:

- spreading children out into different areas, particularly at meal/snack and dressing time;
- incorporating more individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children; and
- using visual cues to promote physical distancing.

In shared outdoor spaces, mixing between groups and any other individuals outside of the group is permitted, though physical distancing should be encouraged between groups as much as possible. Additional suggestions include:

- planning activities for smaller groups when using shared objects or toys;
- when possible, moving activities outside to allow for more space; and
- singing is permitted indoors. Masking is encouraged but not required for singing indoors if a minimum of two metres distance can be maintained between cohorts and as much distancing as possible maintained within a cohort.

Ventilation

Providers are encouraged to implement best practices and measures to optimize ventilation. (see Public Health Ontario's guidance: [Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning \(HVAC\) Systems in Buildings and COVID-19](#)). Adequate ventilation should be provided by opening windows, moving activities outdoors when possible, and through mechanical ventilation including HVAC systems.

Heating, ventilation and air conditioning system (HVACs) and their filters are designed to reduce airborne pollutants, including virus particles, when they circulate through the system.

- Ensure HVAC systems are in good working condition.
- Keep areas near HVAC inlets and outlets clear.
- Arrange furniture away from air vents and high airflow areas.
- Avoid re-circulating air.

While ventilation is important, it must be used along with other public health measures. There is not one public health measure that can guarantee protection from COVID-19; multiple strategies are needed. Other measures include symptom screening and self-isolation for people with symptoms, practicing physical distancing, wearing a mask, and practicing good hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

Equipment and Toy Usage and Restrictions

Provision of toys and equipment made of materials that can be cleaned and disinfected (e.g., avoid plush toys) should be provided as much as possible.

Designated toys and equipment (e.g., balls, loose equipment) are encouraged for each group of children.

If sensory materials (e.g., playdough, water, sand, etc.) are offered, emphasis should be placed on hand hygiene before and after the use of materials.

Outdoor Play

Providers should schedule outdoor play by groups in order to facilitate physical distancing between cohorts as much as possible. However, children are not required to wear masks.

Designated toys and equipment (e.g. balls, loose equipment) are encouraged for each group of children.

Students should bring their own sunscreen where possible and it should not be shared.

- Staff may provide assistance to apply sunscreen to any child requiring it and should exercise proper hand hygiene when doing so (for example washing hands before and after application).

Physical Activities

High-contact physical activities should take place in outdoor settings. Masking is not required outdoors for high contact physical activities.

Low contact activities are permitted indoors. For children in grade 1 and up, masking is encouraged but not required if a minimum of two metres distance can be maintained between groups and as much as possible within a group.

Field Trips

Field trips are permitted as per the [Reopening Ontario Act](#). Children should be cohorted throughout the duration of the trip.

For field trips, anyone entering the area must be screened upon arrival and the pick-up/drop-off of children should happen outside of the area or within a designated and isolated area. Health and safety requirements set out in the guidelines and regulations (e.g. masking, eye protection) and of the place being visited would continue to apply.

Keeping daily accurate records of individuals attending field trips (name, contact information, time of arrival/departure, transportation, location visited) is required to facilitate contact tracing.

Visitors and Students on Educational Placement

All visitors to the program, including parents, students completing educational placements, or others, are subject to the same health and safety protocols outlined above. The number of visitors indoors should be limited to the ability to maintain physical distancing of at least 2 metres.

Providers are expected to have a process in place to validate the screening of visitors.

At the advice of the local public health unit, providers may be asked to restrict visitor access.

Staffing

Movement of supervisors and/or designates, staff and students on educational placement between before and after school program locations and between groups is permitted.

Reducing the movement of staff and students on educational placement where possible is encouraged to minimize potential for transmission.

Food Provision

Providers should follow regular food preparation guidelines.

Family style meals are permitted to operate provided that food handlers use adequate food handling and safety practices.

Nutrition/third party food programs and non-instructional food events (such as pizza day) are permitted to operate.

Ensure proper hand hygiene is practiced when staff are preparing food and for all individuals before and after eating.

Where possible, children should practice physical distancing while eating.

Staff/Provider Training

Providers must ensure that staff training is aligned with local public health unit direction is provided to all staff on the health, safety and other operational measures outlined in this document plus any additional local requirements in place.

- Updated training should be offered such that all staff receive training on current health and safety measures in place according to the Operational Guidance as well as those in place by the local Public Health Unit.
- You may wish to consult the Public Services Health and Safety Association's [Child Care Centre Employer Guideline](#) for information on other measures to consider for staff/providers. Note that there is also a [resource document for Child Care Providers](#).

Communication to Parents and Ministry Reporting

School boards are required to provide information about before and after school programs to parents and guardians in writing and post on the school board's website. For more information on reporting to the Ministry, please see the [Communication to Parents](#) and [Reporting to the Ministry](#) sections below for more details.

MENTAL HEALTH

The ministry recognizes the detrimental impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on children's mental health and well-being. The ministry's [*Building on How Does Learning Happen?*](#) supports the operation of early years and child care programs in Ontario during the COVID-19 outbreak. It provides information on how early years settings can support the social and emotional health and wellbeing of children and families, in addition to safe and healthy environments.

Before and after school program providers are also encouraged to collaborate with child and youth mental health agencies to support strong connections and make the best use of mental health resources and supports across the integrated system of care.

PREFACE

School boards are required to ensure the provision of before and after school programs (i.e. school board-operated and third party programs) in each elementary school in Ontario for students in Kindergarten to Grade 6 where there is sufficient demand and/or viability.

School boards are required to comply with the provisions for before and after school programs set out under [Part IX.1 of the Education Act](#), [Regulation 221/11 entitled “Extended Day and Third Party Programs,”](#) and policies set out in this document. Some provisions under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) and regulations may also apply.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

This document summarizes the provisions set out in the *Education Act* and regulations for before and after school programs for students in Kindergarten to Grade 6. It also sets out requirements with regard to reporting and program content for before and after school programs and additional considerations to support the implementation of these programs.

WORKING TOGETHER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

LOCAL SERVICE SYSTEM MANAGERS

Under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#), Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) are designated as service system managers responsible, at the local level, for the planning and management of early years services, including child care and child and family programs.

Service system managers, in partnership with families, service providers, school boards and community agencies, lead locally-based planning and development to support an integrated approach to child care and early years services that respond to the needs of the community.

The ability to strengthen the quality of child care and early years experiences and enhance system integration requires the strategic leadership of CMSM/DSSABs to initiate, sustain and monitor local planning and development to achieve Ontario’s vision for the early years.

Service system managers are required to develop Service System Plans in accordance with provincial requirements. Service planning should be done in the context of the full range of coordinated early years and child care services for children and families, including before and after school programs for children in Kindergarten to Grade 6.

SCHOOLBOARDS

School boards play a critical role in the child care and early years sector. They provide an environment where services can be co-located and integrated for the purpose of reducing transitions, building cohesion and alignment across early years pedagogy and stronger connections between children, families, and early years and school professionals and educators.

School board leadership is vital to supporting comprehensive and continuous education that supports children from birth to adulthood.

School boards include district school boards and school authorities as defined under the *Education Act*.

DUTY TO COOPERATE

Under the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014 \(CCEYA\)](#) service system managers are required to consult with school boards in the development of service plans. The [CCEYA](#) also states that the service system manager, school boards and other identified child care and early years partners shall cooperate with each other for the purpose of implementing the service plan.

For the past several years, service system managers and schoolboards have worked in partnership to assess and jointly submit school-based early years capital funding projects to the ministry. As part of this process, CMSMs/DSSABs and school boards work closely together to identify suitable early years capital projects that meet the eligibility, sustainability and priority requirements of the ministry, then jointly sign off on all proposals which are submitted for approval.

Through greater integration with early years, child care, and education services, more children will benefit from a seamless day and consistent quality of care that supports healthy child development, well-being and lifelong success.

1. DUTY: PROVISION OF BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL CARE

SCHOOLS SUBJECT TO THE DUTY

Requirement:

In accordance with section 2 of [O. Reg. 221/11](#), school boards are required to ensure the provision of a before and after school program for every elementary school serving students in the primary and/or junior division (i.e. from Kindergarten to Grade 6) where there is sufficient demand and/or viability.

Programs must be available on every instructional school day.

A before and/or after school program may not be required if there is insufficient demand. Please see section 3 for more information.

Considerations:

Programs may operate on non-instructional days (e.g. professional development days, winter, spring and summer breaks) if there is a need required by families within the community.

ELIGIBLE PROVIDERS: SCHOOLBOARD-OPERATED OR THIRD PARTY

Requirement:

In accordance with the Education Act and regulation, school boards may directly operate before and after school programs or they may enter into an agreement with a third party that is either:

- A licensed child care centre that is eligible to receive fee subsidy payments for children enrolled in the program; and/or
- An authorized recreational and skill building program

THIRD PARTY PROGRAMS

Considerations:

When selecting potential service providers, school boards are encouraged to work with their local service system managers to select third party operators that have the capacity to:

- deliver high quality before and after school programs
- collaborate and integrate services with community and school partners
- address the diverse needs of all children and families in the community

Where a school board is proposing to work with a licensed child care centre to meet the expanded duty and wishes to license space in the school to deliver the program, providers are encouraged to begin the licensing application process as early as possible to prevent delays.

School boards have the authority to decide which organizations they enter into agreements with for the purposes of meeting the duty. School boards may enter into agreements with municipalities, for-profit or not-for-profit providers. This flexibility may assist school boards in meeting local child care needs in communities across the province.

Service system managers continue to have discretion about the providers with which they enter into purchase of service agreements. On-going communication and collaboration with the service system manager is essential.

ENTERING INTO AGREEMENTS WITH ANOTHER SCHOOL BOARD

Considerations:

In accordance with the Act and regulations, two or more school boards may enter into an agreement together for one of the school boards to directly operate or enter into an agreement with a third party to operate a before and/or after school program in a school of the board, for students of another school board.

2. PROGRAM FEES AND ACCESS TO CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

PARENT FEES: SCHOOL BOARD- OPERATED PROGRAMS (Extended Day)

Requirement:

In accordance with the [Education Act](#), the [CCEYA](#) and their respective regulations, every school board shall charge fees to parents of students enrolled in school board-operated programs to recover costs incurred by the school board.

School boards are also required to ensure that costs associated with accommodating students with special needs are incorporated into the cost of the program.

Considerations:

A school board may also require a deposit or a registration fee to be paid to enroll a student in a school board-operated program.

- Deposits cannot exceed fees charged by the school board for two weeks enrolment in a program.
- Where a parent withdraws an enrolled student before the first day of the program, school boards must refund deposits, less a maximum of \$50 for administrative fees.
- Registration fees cannot exceed \$50.

PARENT FEES: THIRD PARTY PROGRAMS

School boards do not determine third party fees as these are set by the provider. The ministry does not regulate child care fees set by licensed child care centres or authorized recreational skill building providers.

[Ontario Regulation 137/15](#) prohibits child care centres from charging a waiting list fee or deposit to parents seeking to be added to or removed from a waiting list.

CHILD CARE SUBSIDY

The ministry provides funding to local service system managers who are responsible for the administration of child care fee subsidies in their communities. Child care subsidy is available for children enrolled in licensed child care, school board-operated before and/or after school programs, children enrolled in authorized recreational and skill building programs, and for children enrolled in camps that meet criteria set out under the CCEYA and regulations.

Eligible families may apply for subsidy through their local service system manager. Fee subsidy for eligible families is subject to the availability of subsidy funds within the budget of the CMSM or DSSAB, the existing of a purchase of service agreement with the operator, as well as space being available within a child care program.

Local service system managers have the flexibility to determine how to allocate child care and early years funding to best meet the needs of children, families and service providers within their community. There may be instances where a before and after school program is not in receipt of fee subsidy even if it is eligible.

Service system managers may also choose to provide general operating funding to school board operated programs(extended day programs), as defined under the Education Act, to alleviate high fees to parents, consistent with service system managers' discretion to provide general operating funding to other child care programs.

Requirement:

Child care subsidies may only be provided through the local service system manager. School boards are not permitted to directly provide subsidies to families to access a before and/or afterschool program.

Considerations:

School boards may enter into agreements with a local service system manager to provide subsidies to eligible families with children enrolled in a school board-operated program. Local service system managers may administer child care subsidy based on local policies and priorities, in accordance with ministry regulations and policies, to best respond to the needs in their community.

3. PLANNING: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Requirement:

To support an integrated approach to the planning and delivery of before and after school programs, school boards are required to consult with the following community partners to determine demand and program viability (section 4 of [O. Reg. 221/11](#)):

- Service system manager(s) for the service areas of the school board
- Any First Nation with students attending a school of a board through an existing Education Service Agreement (ESA)¹, an Education Agreement² or the Reciprocal Education Approach (REA)
- Operators of existing third-party programs selected by the school board (e.g. licensed child care programs and authorized recreational and skill building program providers)
- Parents with children who are enrolled/they intend to enroll in Kindergarten – Grade 6 with the school board
- Indigenous organizations that provide culturally appropriate programs and services to urban Indigenous communities

School boards are required to include information regarding the estimated daily fee and non-instruction fee for school board-operated and third party programs when assessing demand. School boards are also required to assess demand for non-instructional days.

WORKING WITH INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATIONS AS LOCAL PARTNERS

The Ministry of Education recognizes the value of culturally appropriate early years and child care programs for Indigenous communities, and is committed to working closely with partners to support a strong early years and child care system for Indigenous children and families.

Early Years and Child Care in Urban Indigenous Communities

The Ministry of Education provides funding to Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSMs) and District Social Services Administration Boards (DSSABs) to support culturally appropriate programming through 61 off reserve Indigenous-led child care and early years projects. This programming is delivered by Indigenous-led organizations in partnership with CMSMs/DSSABs.

Indigenous Education Strategy

Ontario's Indigenous Education Strategy sets the foundation for improving achievement among Indigenous students in provincially funded schools. The strategy supports life-long learning beginning in the early years and continuing through postsecondary, training or workplace opportunities. In addition, it raises awareness about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions among all students.

The Ministry is committed to providing equitable, culturally appropriate, positive and safe education for Indigenous students through strengthening Ontario's education system and well-being for First Nation, Métis & Inuit learners and all learners.

¹ Existing ESA refers to ESAs entered into prior to September 1, 2019.

² "Education Agreements" is a term the ministry uses to describe agreements entered into on or after September 1, 2019 which are intended to support students attending schools under the REA..

The government is also committed to continuing to build positive relationships with Ontario First Nation, Métis and Inuit partners and working in a spirit of mutual respect through all interactions. Strong partnerships between the ministry, school boards, schools, educators, families, students, community organizations and Indigenous partners are essential.

Considerations:

District school boards should engage regularly with local First Nation communities and with their Indigenous Education Councils and partner with Indigenous organizations, such as their local Indigenous Friendship Centres, to support Indigenous students who may be accessing before and after school programs.

Collaborating with Indigenous communities and organizations will help the province meet its commitments to both reconciliation and its equity and inclusive education policy.

A CONSISTENT APPROACH FOR FAMILIES

Considerations:

As part of the consultative planning process, school boards must work with their local service system manager(s), community partners and Indigenous education partners, including urban Indigenous organizations, to develop an approach to assess sufficient demand and viability. The regulatory framework provides flexibility for partners to work together to assess viability and demand and develop planning processes that are culturally responsive to the particular needs of a community, including First Nations,

Métis, and Inuit communities. Factors for consideration may include:

- Demand and/or gaps in services:
 - These gaps may include specific populations that face barriers to accessing programs and may require specific programming to accommodate their specific needs
 - Partners may wish to co-create community surveys and share existing information such as waitlist data for child care or enrolment data in schools
 - Interests identified by children and families in programming (programming content, hours of operation, provision of snacks)
- Capacity to expand and/or establishing program
 - Partners may identify existing service providers and their capacity to meet specific programming needs in the community (e.g. culturally responsive, newcomer programs)
 - Partners may consider the availability of qualified staff and/or service providers that are able to meet the programming requirements
 - School boards may take an inventory of existing programs offered in their schools that operate before and after school such as licensed child care centres, nutrition programs, and After-School Programs funded by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries

- Parent Fees
 - Programs should consider demand for both full fee paying families and families that require subsidy to access programming
 - Where demand is insufficient in the absence of subsidies, a program may not be viable
 - School boards are encouraged to work with their local service system manager to support equitable access to before and after school programs for children

School boards and local service system managers are encouraged to share information to develop a common approach to assessing viability of programs and identify potential solutions at a community level.

School boards are encouraged to work through their local service system manager(s) to engage with existing third-party providers.

CO-TERMINOUS SCHOOL BOARDS

Consideration:

School boards are encouraged to work with their co-terminous school boards to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of before and after school care for families across the community.

Please note: The regulatory requirement that each parent is surveyed every year has been removed from regulation (though school boards may continue to use the survey to inform planning discussions).

EXEMPTIONS FROM DUTY

Requirement:

A before and/or after school program may not be required for a school if the school board, the local service system manager and any First Nation with students attending that school³ are in agreement that there is insufficient demand.

This assessment must be informed by the consultative process set out above, which includes engagement with urban Indigenous organizations, existing third party providers, and parents.

DETERMINATIONS

Requirement:

Based on the consultative process, school boards must determine:

- The schools in which the school board will offer before and after school programs in the next school year for students enrolled in Kindergarten to Grade 6 including:
 - the length of time the program will operate
 - the times in the day during which the before and after school portions of the program will operate

³ Refers to First Nations with students attending a school of a board through an existing Education Service Agreement (ESA), an Education Agreement or the Reciprocal Education Approach (REA).

- any non-instructional days on which the school board anticipates before and/or after school program will operate
- the features the schoolboard-operated program will include (e.g. provision of snack, homework help)
- The daily fee and non-instructional daily fee for school board-operated program

Reporting requirements set out in section 9 below include an affirmation signed by the school board, relevant local service system manager(s) and First Nations indicating there is agreement that where a before and/or after school program is not offered, the school is exempt from the duty because it is not viable (e.g. there is insufficient demand). See section 9 for more information.

4. SCHOOL BOARD–OPERATED (EXTENDED DAY) PROGRAM

PRINCIPLES GUIDING PROGRAMMING

Requirement:

School board-operated programs complement what happens during the regular school day and are guided by [How Does Learning Happen?: Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) (HDLH). Consistent with HDLH it is expected that school board-operated programs are guided by the following principles:

- *View of the Child:* All students are competent, capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential. Environments and experiences allow students to exercise choice and responds to individual abilities and interests.
- *Positive Interactions:* Programs support students in making connections with their peers and staff in structured and unstructured interactions as well as provide opportunities for students to engage in independent activities. All students, including students with differing abilities feel valued, connected to others, and are able to make positive contributions to the group, community and natural world.
- *Developmentally Responsive:* All students are able to participate fully in ways that are most comfortable for them. Programs support physical and mental health and wellness, and are rooted in an understanding of child development and the broader contexts within which this development is happening (e.g. local, social, cultural, economic).
- *Safe, Inclusive Spaces:* Programs establish and maintain positive, harassment/discrimination free environments for optimal participant growth so that students, each with differing abilities, interests and perspectives feel that their experiences and strength are valued.

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) provides a comprehensive framework to guide program development and pedagogy in early years settings and support Ontario's vision of high quality programs and services centered on the child and family with a view of children as competent and capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential.

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) helps move Ontario towards increasingly integrated programs and services for children and families whether in child care, child and family programs, or Kindergarten, with a shared view of the child, common pedagogical approaches and foundations of belonging, well-being, engagement and expression that are aligned with the Kindergarten program.

STAFFING RATIOS

Requirement:

- The maximum allowable child to adult staffing ratio for a school board-operated program shall be 15:1.
- Where a program unit size exceeds a child to adult ratio of 15:1, the school board shall appoint another staff person to that program unit.⁴
- Each group of children shall not exceed a maximum size of 30 students (this maximum size does not refer to the total number of children served by a program. There may be multiple groups of children, in separate areas, served by one program).

STAFF QUALIFICATIONS AND ADULT SUPERVISION

Requirement:

As set out under Part IX.1 of the Education Act, school board-operated programs must have at least one Registered Early Childhood Educator (RECE) to lead the program unit.

For programs only serving children 9 years of age or older, there must be at least one adult to lead the program unit who meets one of the following criteria:

- Has a diploma or degree in child and youth care;
- Has a diploma or degree in recreation and leisure services;
- Is a member in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers; or
- Is a member in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators

Programs must have adult supervision on-site at all times. Additionally, where a program is the sole occupant of the premises, there must be a minimum of two adults onsite at all times.

Considerations:

Programs may wish to exceed the minimum ratio and staffing requirements. Research suggests that smaller group sizes support more meaningful and positive interactions between children. This may also permit greater capacity to support children with higher levels of need.

⁴ A program unit is defined as a single class or cohort of children.

ACTIVE PLAY

Requirement

School board-operated programs are required to offer a minimum of 30 minutes of active play in daily programming to provide opportunities for increased physical activity for children and youth. Activities should be developmentally appropriate and accommodate fitness levels and interests of students. Emphasis should be on participation and enjoyment and can include introducing participants to a range of developmentally appropriate physical activities such as sports, dance, free gym time, and active games.

This requirement aligns with the [Public Health Agency of Canada's guidelines](#) recommending 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity for children aged 5-17. It is also consistent with the principles outlined in [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), which include creating opportunities for children to engage in active play that allow them to connect with the natural world and their community.

OUTDOOR PLAY

Considerations:

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) notes that children thrive where they can engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces. In addition to providing physical benefits, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.

OPTIONAL ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS

Considerations:

School boards may wish to offer specific programming based on the needs and interests of the community and participants in the program. This programming can include:

- Unstructured time to allow children to develop interests, engage with their peers, play independently, and make choices and decisions for themselves
- Academic assistance or time for students to complete schoolwork
- Arts and cultural activities that promote inclusion, knowledge of other cultures, or creative pursuits
- Personal health and wellness education (e.g. anti-bullying, body image, fostering resilience)
- Community involvement
- Providing snacks for students participating in the program. All food should meet recommendations set out in [Canada's Food Guide](#).

DEVELOPMENTALLY RESPONSIVE SPACES

Considerations:

Programs should ensure spaces are clean and in a good state of repair. Environments should be inviting and designed together with students based on their abilities and interests, allowing for a variety of activities that are responsive to individual development. Spaces should allow for both independent and small group experiences. Furnishings and materials should support a range of interests that provide for learning, creative expression, recreational activities, and relaxation.

5. AUTHORIZED RECREATIONAL/SKILLBUILDING PROGRAMS

Where a school board chooses to enter into an agreement with a provider to deliver an authorized recreational and skill building program, the school board must ensure that the following programming requirements set out below are included in the agreement between the schoolboard and the authorized recreational skill building program provider.

AUTHORIZEDRECREATIONALANDSKILLBUILDING PROGRAMS

For after school programs that serve kindergarten students or higher, school boards may enter into an agreement with an authorized recreational and skill building program.

As set out under [subsection 6\(4\) of the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*](#) and its [General Regulation, Authorized Recreational and Skill Building Programs](#) may operate on weekdays during the school year, outside the time when instruction is typically provided for pupils enrolled in schools for no more than one period of **up to 3 consecutive hours** of care each day. The program must include, as a complementary purpose, activities that promote recreational, artistic, musical or athletic skills or provide religious, cultural or linguistic instruction. Children must be aged 4 (or if the child care is provided on or after September 1 in a calendar year, the child will attain the age of 4 in that year) and up, the program must not be operated at a person's home and the program must be:

- Operated by the local service system manager, a municipality, a school board, a First Nation or the Métis Nation of Ontario;
- Operated by an organization that delivers Ontario's After School Program funded by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (MHSTCI);
- Operated by a member of YMCA Canada or by a member of Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada,
- Operated by a member of a provincial sport organization or multi-sport organization recognized by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries, where the program's activities are related to the sport or sports promoted by the organization
- Operated by an organization that is recognized by Parks and Recreation Ontario as a HIGH FIVE accredited organization;
- Operated by a Friendship Centre that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres;
- Operated by an agency or attraction of the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (e.g. ROM, Ontario Science Centre); or
- Authorized by the local service system manager or a First Nation to offer child care, provided that the program supports the health, safety and well-being of children.

Expanded Hours

Section 3.1 of [O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the CCEYA allows the following authorized recreational providers to operate before and after school programs with expanded hours (more than 3 hours each day) on weekdays during the school year, upon Ministry approval:

- a local service system manager, municipality or First Nation
- an organization delivering Ontario's After School Program funded by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries
- member of YMCA Canada or Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada
- a Friendship Centre that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres.

Eligible providers wishing to operate under the exemption must seek approval from the ministry. More information about this process can be found [online](#).

PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Research suggests that key factors in quality after-school programs include staff qualifications, small group sizes, more adults per child to encourage increased and meaningful interaction, and a variety of activities that stem from self-directed programming.

Principles Guiding Programming

Requirement

Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs should be consistent with [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#).

- *View of the Child:* All students are competent and capable of complex thinking, curious and rich in potential. Programming allows students to exercise choice and responds to individual interests.

Positive Interactions: Programs support students in making connections with their peers and staff in structured and unstructured interactions, and provide opportunities for students to engage in independent activities. All Students, including students with differing abilities, feel valued, connected to others, and are able to make positive contributions to the group, community and natural world.

- *Developmentally Responsive:* All students are able to participate fully in ways that are most comfortable for them. Programs support physical and mental health and wellness, and are rooted in an understanding of child development and the broader contexts within which this development is happening (e.g. local, social, cultural, economic).
- *Safe, Inclusive Spaces:* Programs establish and maintain positive, harassment/discrimination free environments for optimal participant growth so that students, each with differing abilities, interests and perspectives feel that their experiences and strengths are valued.

Staffing Ratios

Requirement:

Authorized recreational and skill building programs must have a minimum of one staff person for every 15 students (1:15). Where the number of students exceeds 15, a second staff person is required.

Each group of children shall not exceed a maximum size of 30 students. Note that this does not refer to the total number of children served by a program. There may be multiple groups of children, in separate areas, served by one program.

Staff Qualifications and Supervision

Requirement:

Each program must have access to at least one adult to lead the program who meets one of the following criteria:

- Is a member in good standing with the College of Early Childhood Educators; or
- Is a member in good standing with the Ontario College of Teachers; or
- Has a diploma or degree in child and youth care; or
- Has a diploma or degree in recreation and leisure services; or
- Has a diploma or degree in social work, psychology, sociology, kinesiology with a focus/experience working with children aged 4 (or if the child care is provided on or after September 1 in a calendar year, the child will attain the age of 4 in that year) to 12 years old.

Programs must have adult supervision on-site at all times and at least one adult must meet the requirements above or be enrolled as a student in the fields identified above.

Additionally, where a program is the sole occupant of the premises, there must be a minimum of two adults on-site at all times.

Active Play

Requirement:

After-school programs must offer a minimum of 30 minutes of active play in daily programming. Activities should be developmentally appropriate and accommodate fitness levels and interests of students. Emphasis should focus on participation and enjoyment and can include introducing participants to a range of developmentally appropriate physical activities such as sports, dance, free gym time, and active games.

This requirement aligns with the [Public Health Agency of Canada's guidelines](#) recommending 60 minutes of daily moderate to vigorous physical activity for children aged 5-17. It is also consistent with the principles outlined in [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), which include creating opportunities for children to engage in active play that allow them to connect with the natural world and their community.

Outdoor Play

Considerations:

[How Does Learning Happen? Ontario's Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) notes that children thrive where they can engage in vigorous physical play in natural outdoor spaces. In addition to providing physical benefits, active play outdoors strengthens functioning in cognitive areas such as perception, attention, creative problem solving, and complex thinking.

Optional Activities and Programs

Considerations:

School boards may encourage recreation providers to offer specific programming based on the needs and interests of the community and participants in the program. This programming can include:

- Unstructured time to allow children to develop interests, engage with their peers, play independently, and make choices and decisions for themselves
- Academic assistance or time for students to complete schoolwork
- Arts and cultural activities that promote inclusion, knowledge of other cultures, or creative pursuits
- Personal health and wellness education (e.g. anti-bullying, body image, fostering resilience)
- Community involvement
- Providing snacks for students participating in the program. All food should meet [Canada's Food Guide, updated and released to the public in January 2019.](#)

Developmentally Responsive Spaces

Considerations:

Programs should ensure spaces are clean and in a good state of repair. Environments should be inviting and designed together with students based on their abilities and interests, allowing for a variety of activities that are responsive to individual development. Spaces should allow for both independent and small group experiences.

Furnishings and materials should support a range of interests that provide for learning, creative expression, recreational activities, and relaxation.

HEALTH AND SAFETY REQUIREMENTS

Requirement:

Where a school board chooses to enter into an agreement with an authorized recreational and skill building program, the agreements must require that the operator meet the following conditions:

Policies and Procedures

Requirement:

Authorized recreational and skill building programs must have the following policies in place at

each site and reviewed annually with all staff:

- An emergency action plan communicated with the school and visibly posted
- Accident and injury reporting
- Plans for children with medical or special needs
- Safety policies to monitor equipment and facilities
- Reducing risk of and responding to exposure to anaphylactic causative agents
- Safe arrival and departure procedures for children, particularly with regard to transitions after the school day (see below)
- Safe food handling with a minimum of one staff person that has been certified in a licensed safe food handling course
- Vulnerable sector screening for all staff prior to interacting with children
- The provision of healthy and nutritious food and drink for students (if the program provides snacks)
- Ensuring protection of privacy of children, youth and their families

Safe Arrival/Dismissal Policy

Requirement:

At a minimum, this policy should include a:

- Daily sign-in/sign-out procedure so that staff are aware of which children are in attendance and which are absent
- Procedure to be followed if a child does not attend and staff have not been notified in advance of the reason (e.g. contact school/parent if child has not arrived by a certain time)
- Process by which parents must inform the program in writing of who is or is not allowed to pick up their children
- Process by which parents must provide written consent for children of any age to sign themselves in and out

Process by which the authorized recreational and skill building provider communicates with the school to support transitions before and/or after the school day

Standard First Aid and CPR

Requirement:

All staff must be certified in Standard First Aid / CPR from a Workplace Safety Insurance Board (WSIB) recognized agency.

Section 58 of [O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the CCEYA allows an Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs to employ a person who does not have a valid certification in standard first aid for up to three months if:

- the operator requires the person to obtain the certification as soon as reasonably possible;
- the length of time required to obtain the certification justifies it; and
- at any time during which the person is supervising children, another individual that is certified in Standard First Aid/CPR is available and would be able to respond to an emergency.

Vulnerable Sector Checks

Requirement:

Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs are required to obtain vulnerable sector checks (VSCs) from all staff, volunteers, and students before they interact with children.

For any person, other than an employee, volunteer or student, who provides services to a child in the program, the program must obtain an offence declaration from the person or an attestation from their employer that a vulnerable sector check has been obtained and reviewed.

Under section 61.1 of [O. Reg. 137/15](#) under the CCEYA the following individuals are not required to obtain vulnerable sector checks:

- police officers;
- firefighters;
- ambulance attendants, paramedics or other emergency personnel;
- regulated health professionals; and
- professionals regulated under the [Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, O. Reg 174/21](#).

Vulnerable sector checks should be renewed every five years and offence declarations should be completed annually except in the year when a vulnerable sector check is obtained.

Authorized Recreational and Skill Building programs are required to have a policy in place to ensure that persons in contact with children in their programs are appropriately screened or supervised.

ORGANIZATIONAL REQUIREMENTS

Professional Learning and Development

Requirement:

Authorized recreational and skill building programs must have a staff training plan that ensures orientation, as well as initial and ongoing staff education. A staff training plan must include:

- Yearly after school/organizational orientation where the staff sign off on the organization's policies and procedures
- Training in occupational health and safety (WHMIS)
- Training in ways to encourage positive interactions and communication among peers and support students' self-regulation abilities; and training on prohibited adult practices (i.e. using harsh or degrading measures withholding physical activity as a form of punishment)
- Training in conflict resolution
- Training in Standard First Aid and CPR certificate from a WSIB recognized agency (i.e. Red Cross, St. John's Ambulance)
- Training in healthy child development (e.g. High Five's "Principles of Healthy Child Development")

- Training on the role of healthy eating for the development of healthy behaviours and one staff at each location must be trained in safe food handling
- Training in adapting physical activity opportunities to include children and youth at all levels of athletic ability and those with physical, sensory or intellectual disability
- Training and familiarity with resources on integrating physical activity throughout the program

Liability Insurance

Requirement:

A current certificate of Comprehensive General Liability for at least \$2 million naming “Her Majesty the Queen in right of Ontario, Her Ministers, Agents, Appointees and Employees” as additionally insured.

6. LICENSED CHILD CARE CENTRES

Licensed child care centres are regulated under the *Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014*. Under the Act and its regulations, centres must meet a number of provincial standards including:

- Maximum group size and ratios for staff and children in care
- Staff qualifications
- Policies and procedures to support health, safety and wellbeing of children in care.

These regulations also require that licensed child care centres are guided by [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#) in the development of their programming for children. Consistent with [How Does Learning Happen? Ontario’s Pedagogy for the Early Years](#), licensed child care centres offering before and after school care are required to provide a minimum of 30 minutes of outdoor time each day in their programming.

7. THIRD PARTY PROGRAMS: LINKAGES TO THE SCHOOL DAY

TRANSITIONS AROUND THE SCHOOL DAY

Requirement:

Agreements must include how third party programs and schools ensure the safe arrival and departure of children enrolled in third party programs as they transition between the school day, before and after school programs, and home.

Considerations:

Children have differing experiences and connections with their school. It is important that school boards and providers are considering transition requirements that support the individual needs of children in the program. A child may have an individualized education plan where specific supports may be required to transition children from the school day to before and/or after school programming. At the discretion of the board, a transition plan may also be developed for students who receive special education programs and/or services but do not have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) and have not been identified as exceptional.

Individualized transition plans that reflect a student's strengths and needs provide the foundation for successful transitional experiences that support the building of student resiliency. Articulating student transition needs can also be a valuable component of developing an individual student profile.

SAFE SCHOOLS

Requirement:

In accordance with section 28 of [O. Reg. 221/11](#), agreements must include that operators of third party programs must ensure that when its employees or contractors become aware that a student of the schoolboard may have engaged in an activity for which suspension or expulsion must be considered, that these staff or contractors report the matter to the school's principal.

PROGRAMS OFFERED OFF SCHOOL PREMISES

Considerations:

School boards may choose to offer programs off school premises through a third party provider. For example, an after-school program for 4-12-yearolds may be offered at a municipal community centre where the space may be more developmentally appropriate for the children. Although this is permissible, school boards should ensure that appropriate transitions (including transportation to the location, where applicable) are provided to support the safety and well-being of all children.

This is intended to recognize existing partnerships between school boards and municipalities and service providers to serve children and better integrate existing services to support local planning, particularly for after school recreation programs.

8. COMMUNICATION TO PARENTS

Requirements:

As soon as possible, school boards are required to provide the following information to parents and guardians in writing and post on the school board's website.

- The fees for before and after school programs
- The process and approach for determining sufficient demand and viability
- Schools that will and will not be offering a before and/or after school program
- Information on how to apply for financial assistance for before and after school programs
- Notice that if a third party program ceases to operate, the school board will ensure that another program will be available but the fees, days and times of operation may change

Considerations:

School boards may wish to work with their Indigenous and community partners and co-terminous board to help communicate information to parents.

9. REPORTING TO THE MINISTRY

Requirements:

School boards are required to report the following information to the ministry each school year:

- For the current school year:
 - A Summary of
 - How the school board consulted with the local service system manager(s), First Nations⁵, existing service providers, urban Indigenous organizations and parents
 - Total number of schools that will be delivering a before and after school program
 - The maximum number of spaces for children in before and after school programs excluding non-instructional days
 - Names of all schools exempt from the duty
 - Range of daily fees (i.e. lowest fees and highest fees) for before and/or- after school programs (excluding non-instructional days).
 - Affirmation signed by applicable local service system manager(s) and First Nation(s) that:
 - Sufficient demand and viability was determined
 - There is agreement that the schools that are not offering a before and/or after school program is exempt from the duty because a program was not viable or had insufficient demand
 - Affirmation that third party and board-operated programs meet the requirements under the Education Act

Considerations:

School boards may also wish to provide the following information:

- What additional information and data were used or collected to support planning (surveys, asset mapping, demographic projections, waitlist information)

⁵ Refers to First Nations with students attending a school of a board through an existing Education Service Agreement (ESA), an Education Agreement or the Reciprocal Education Approach (REA).