

Ministry of Education

Before and After School Programs Kindergarten – Grade 6

**POLICIES AND GUIDELINES FOR
SCHOOL BOARDS FOR THE
2020-2021 SCHOOL YEAR**

Highlights of Changes:

- (Page 9) Updated guidance on masking: non-medical masks or face covering are mandatory for all students in grades 1 and up while inside a before and after school program setting, including in hallways; children younger than grade 1 are encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face covering while inside a before and after school program setting, including in hallways.
- (Page 9) Updated guidance on face covering outdoors: all individuals in a before and after school program, staff and placement students, are required to wear medical masks outdoors when a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. All children in grades 1 and above are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering outdoors when a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained, while children younger than grade 1 are encouraged to wear a non-medical mask or face covering.
- (Page 10) Additional guidance around screening practices:
 - Staff, essential visitors, placement students, and children with any new or worsening symptom of COVID-19, as indicated in COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool, even those with only one symptom, must stay home until:
 - They receive a negative COVID-19 test result,
 - They receive an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional, or
 - It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.
 - If any household members are experiencing any new COVID-19 symptoms and/or are waiting for COVID-19 test results after experiencing symptoms, the child, staff, or placement student must not attend the before and after school program.
 - Providers are required to conduct daily on-site confirmation of self-screening for staff, essential visitors, and placement students who are entering the premises.
 - Staff, essential visitors and placement students will need to, at minimum, provide daily confirmation that they have completed and passed the online screener in a form deemed appropriate (and accessible) by the provider prior to or upon entry to the program.
 - Any staff, essential visitors or student that has not completed the self-screen will be required to complete self-screening prior to entry.
 - Any staff, essential visitor or student that does not pass the on-site screening procedures will be asked to return home and self-isolate until they meet the criteria for return.
- (p.12) Additional guidance around isolation practices:
 - The Ministry of Health updated guidance to public health units regarding COVID-19 variants of concern, requiring all household contacts of symptomatic individuals to quarantine.

- All asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine until the symptomatic household member:
 - receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or
 - receives an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional
 - If the symptomatic individual tests positive, or is not tested and does not receive an alternative diagnosis from a health care professional, the symptomatic individual must isolate (including from household members) for 10 days from symptom onset, and all household contacts must isolate until 14 days from their last contact with the symptomatic individual.
- (Page 15) Additional guidance regarding space set-up and physical distancing when using gymnasiums for before and after school programs to provide opportunities for physical activity for children and youth:
 - Children and staff should not be engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity indoors. When moderate to vigorous physical activity takes place outdoors, children and staff should maintain physical distancing. Masks should not be worn for high intensity activity.
 - Gymnasiums should only be used for moderate activity where physical distancing measures and current masking protocols for children and program staff can be followed.
 - Efforts should be made to limit the use of shared equipment. Shared equipment should be disinfected regularly and children and program staff should practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.
- (Page 17) Additional guidance on staff/provider training: providers must ensure that all staff receive training on current health and safety measures in place according to this guidance as well as those put in place by the local Public Health Unit

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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 2020-2021 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](#), the [COVID-19 guidance on school outbreak management](#), 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 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 approved by 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.

At this time, all before and after school programs are permitted to operate using maximum group sizes as set out under the [CCEYA](#) (i.e., licensed age groups prior to the COVID-19 outbreak).

While the focus of this guidance document is on the health, safety and operational measures that are required in order to safely operate before and after school program, 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.
- 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

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

- Please refer to Public Health Ontario's [Environmental Cleaning fact sheet](#) for information on cleaning.
- School boards are required to ensure that the classroom(s) and other spaces used by the before and after school program are cleaned and disinfected: 1) after the before school program ends and the core day program starts and 2) after the core day program ends and the after school program begins.
- Frequently touched surfaces should be cleaned and disinfected twice daily 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.
- Existing practices should be reviewed to determine where enhancements might be required, including frequency and timing of cleaning and disinfection, areas to clean and/or disinfect, choice of cleaning products, and child safety, staffing, signage, and PPE use when cleaning.
- It may also be helpful to keep an inventory to determine items to be stored, moved, or removed altogether to reduce handling or the challenges associated with cleaning them (for example, porous or soft items such as stuffed toys, area rugs, fabric upholstered seating).
- Information from [Public Health Ontario](#) provides 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.
- It is recommended that shared spaces (i.e., washrooms) or shared objects, should be cleaned in between each use and only one group at a time should access the shared space/equipment.

- 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).
 - Use disposable cleaning equipment, such as disposable wipes, where possible
 - Remove all items that cannot be cleaned (paper, books, etc.) and store them in a sealed container for a minimum of 7 days.
- A focus on proper hand hygiene before and after using shared play structures is advised.

Guidance on the Use of Masks, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and Hand Hygiene

Expectations for adults in a before and after school program:

- All staff and providers are required to wear medical masks and eye protection (e.g. face shield or goggles) 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).
- All other adults (i.e. parents/guardians and visitors) are required to wear a face covering or non-medical mask while inside the premises (see information about the use of face coverings on the provincial [COVID-19 website](#)).
- The use of masks is required outdoors if physical distancing of a least 2-metres cannot be maintained between individuals.

Expectations for children:

- All children in grades 1 and above are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering while inside, including in hallways.
- All children in grades 1 and above are required to wear a non-medical mask or face covering outdoors when a distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained.
- Children younger than grade 1 are encouraged to wear non-medical masks or face coverings in indoor spaces including in hallways.
- See the [provincial COVID-19 website](#) or the [Public Health Ontario factsheet on how to wear a mask](#) for more information about masks.
- 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.
- Proper use of PPE:
 - Refer to [Public Health Ontario resources](#) 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 [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.

- Perform and promote frequent, proper hand hygiene (including supervising or assisting participants with hand hygiene). Hand washing using soap and water is recommended over alcohol-based hand rub when hands are visibly soiled and for children. Refer to Public Health Ontario's [How to Wash Your Hands fact sheet](#).
- Masks should be replaced when they become damp or visibly soiled.
- Reasonable exceptions to the requirement to wear masks are expected to be put in place by providers. Exceptions to wearing masks indoors could include circumstances where a physical distance of at least 2 metres can be maintained between individuals, situations where a child cannot tolerate wearing a mask, reasonable exemptions for medical conditions, etc. Refer to the [Government of Ontario's Guidance on Face Coverings and Face Masks](#) for more information on who should not wear a mask.
 - Providers should ensure their masking exceptions policies support children 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.
- Service 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 to remove masks and eat).
- 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 (i.e. young children under the age of two).
- Providers should document their requirements and exemptions related to masks (e.g., within their COVID-19 policy).
- Sourcing PPE:
 - 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

A more rigorous and cautious approach has been adopted to support a more comprehensive and enhanced school and child care screening program. Staff, placement students, and children with **any new or worsening symptom** of COVID-19, as indicated in [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#), even those with only one symptom, must stay home until:

- They receive a negative COVID-19 test result

- They receive an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional, or
- It has been 10 days since their symptom onset and they are feeling better.

In addition, if any household members currently experience any new COVID-19 symptoms and/or are waiting for COVID-19 test results after experiencing symptoms, the child, staff or placement student must not attend the before and after school program. (see *Monitoring and Responding to Reports of COVID-19 Symptoms* section below for isolation and quarantine requirements)

Providers are to ensure that on-site confirmation of self-screening is conducted for all before and after school program staff, essential visitors and placement students, as outlined below.

Before and After School Program Staff, Visitors and Placement Students

- In addition to daily self-screening, providers are expected to have a process in place to validate the daily self-screening of staff, essential visitors and placement students upon their arrival at the before and after school program.
- The provider will be responsible for ensuring all staff, essential visitors and placement students have completed and passed their daily COVID-19 self-screen. The [COVID-19 School and Child Care Screening Tool](#) can support providers to meet this requirement.
- At a minimum, staff, essential visitors and placement students are to complete and provide daily confirmation of having self-screened, in a format deemed appropriate and accessible by the provider (e.g. proof of completed paper copy of screener, mobile application indicating a “pass”), prior to/upon entry.
- Any of these individuals that do not pass the on-site screening procedures will be asked to return home and self-isolate.
- At the advice of the local public health unit, providers may choose to implement additional on-site screening measures based on local circumstances.

School boards and before and after school program partners are encouraged to work together to implement regional specific protocols where programs are located in schools.

Children

Parents and guardians are required to screen their children for symptoms of illness every day. [COVID-19 School and Child Care 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.
- At the advice of the local public health unit, providers may choose to implement additional on-site 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.

- Signs should be posted at entrances to the child care setting 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.
 - The ministry continues to ask that screening criteria is aligned to the provincial tool
 - 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 child care 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.

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., staff, cleaners, people doing maintenance work, people providing supports for children with special needs).
- 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 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

The Ministry of Health updated guidance to public health units regarding COVID-19 variants of concern, requiring all household contacts of symptomatic individuals to quarantine.

- All asymptomatic household contacts of symptomatic individuals are required to quarantine until the symptomatic household member:
 - receives a negative COVID-19 test result, or
 - receives an alternative diagnosis by a health care professional
- If the symptomatic individual tests positive, or is not tested and does not receive an alternative diagnosis from a health care professional, the symptomatic individual must isolate (including from household members) for 10 days from symptom onset, and all household contacts must isolate until 14 days from their last contact with the symptomatic individual.
- Anyone who is symptomatic, does not pass screening, or has been advised to self-isolate by the local public health unit must not be permitted to attend the program (this includes children, before and after school program staff and placement students).
- 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 added 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 be advised to use the [online self-assessment tool](#) and follow instructions which may include seeking medical advice 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 Public Health 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.

- As much as possible, parents should not enter the premises.
- 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 recently released [guidance for student transportation](#).

Washrooms and Toileting

- Only one cohort of students should access the washroom at a time and it is recommended that the facilities be cleaned and disinfected in between use by each group.
- In the event that it is not possible to clean the washroom(s) in between the use by each group of students, focus on proper hand hygiene before and after using the washroom is advised.

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.
- Each group of students should have their own assigned indoor space, separated from all other groups by a physical barrier. The purpose of the barrier is to reduce the spread of respiratory droplets that are thought to transmit COVID-19 and to reinforce physical distancing requirements between groups. The physical barrier should begin at the floor and reach a minimum height of 8 feet to ensure that it will always be 12 inches taller than the tallest person in the facility. It should be as wide as the space/room will allow.
- 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, a distance of at least 2 metres must be maintained between groups and any other individuals outside of the group at all times.
- Shared spaces that cannot be cleaned and disinfected between groups should not be used.
- When using gymnasiums for before and after school programs to provide opportunities for

physical activity for children and youth:

- Children and staff should not be engaged in moderate to vigorous physical activity indoors. When moderate to vigorous physical activity takes place outdoors, children and staff should maintain physical distancing. Masks should not be worn for high intensity activity.
- Gymnasiums should only be used for moderate activity where physical distancing measures and current masking protocols for children and program staff can be followed.
- Efforts should be made to limit the use of shared equipment. Shared equipment should be disinfected regularly and children and program staff should practice proper hand hygiene before and after participating in physical activity and equipment use.
- Additional suggestions include:
 - planning activities that do not involve shared objects or toys;
 - when possible, moving activities outside to allow for more space; and
 - singing should only be done in alignment with the requirements set out in [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#).

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 encouraged.
- Designated toys and equipment (e.g., balls, loose equipment) should be provided for each room or group of students. Where toys and equipment are shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected prior to being shared, including between groups.
- If sensory materials (e.g., playdough, water, sand, etc.) are offered, they should be provided for single child's use (i.e. available to the child for the duration of the program) and labelled with the student's name, if applicable.
- Play structures can only be used by one group of students at a time. Please consult with your local public health unit regarding the use of playground equipment onsite.

Outdoor Play

- Schedule outdoor play by groups in order to facilitate physical distancing. Where the outdoor play area is large enough to accommodate multiple groups, groups must remain separated by at least 2 metres.
- If play structures are to be used by more than one group, the structures should only be used by one group at a time.
- Designated toys and equipment (e.g. balls, loose equipment) for each group is encouraged. Where toys and equipment are shared, they should be cleaned and disinfected prior to being shared.
- 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).

Food Provision

- Change meal practices to ensure there is no self-serve or sharing of food at meal times.
 - Utensils should be used by staff to serve food (i.e., not handled by the children).
 - Meals should be served in individual portions to the children.

- There should be no items shared (i.e., serving spoon or salt shaker).
- There should be no food provided by the family/outside of the regular meal provision of the program (except where required with special precautions for handling and serving put in place).
- Children should neither prepare nor provide food that will be shared with others.
- 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.
- There should be no sharing of utensils.

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

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.

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.

SCHOOL BOARDS

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 school boards 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: SCHOOL BOARD-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 for after-school programs

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 are not required to prioritize agreements with third party programs that are operated by a not-for-profit or a municipality. School boards will continue to have the authority to decide who to enter into agreements with for the purposes of meeting their duty. School boards may wish to continue to work with not-for-profit third party providers or enter into agreements with for-profit providers in order to best meet their local needs. This flexibility may assist school boards in meeting the various needs of child care in different communities across the province.

Although the prioritization of not-for-profit operators has been removed for child care funding, 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 recreation 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 program, 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 after school 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 that has a tuition agreement with the school board
- Operators of existing third-party programs selected by the school board (e.g. licensed child care programs and authorized recreation 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

The Ministry of Education is committed to working with Indigenous and education partners to continue improving Indigenous student achievement and well-being in Ontario and increasing all students' knowledge and understanding of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit histories, cultures, contributions and perspectives.

Ontario supports strategies for improving achievement among Indigenous students in provincially funded schools beginning in the early years and continuing through

postsecondary, training or workplace opportunities. In addition, the Ministry of Education is committed to raising awareness about First Nation, Métis, and Inuit cultures, histories, perspectives and contributions among all students.

The government is 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 with their Indigenous Education Councils and with Indigenous organizations, such as their local Indigenous Friendship Centres, to support Indigenous students who may be accessing before and after school programs.

Working with Indigenous 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) and their community partners, including urban Indigenous organizations, to develop an approach on how 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 responsive to the particular qualities and needs of a community. 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 there is agreement between the school board, the local service system manager and any First Nation with a tuition agreement relating to students attending that school 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
 - any non-instructional days on which the school board anticipates before and/or after school program will operate
 - the features the school board-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.
- 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.

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 school work
- 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/SKILL BUILDING 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 school board and the recreation program provider.

AUTHORIZED RECREATIONAL AND SKILL BUILDING 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.

Authorized recreational and skill building program providers include municipalities, the YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada, and Ontario's After School Program funded by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries.

Two new providers/operators have been added to the list of authorized recreational and skill building programs exemption under section 3.1 of Ontario Regulation 137/15. Programs that are recognized by Parks and Recreation Ontario as a HIGH FIVE© accredited organization and programs that are operated by a Friendship Centre that is a member of the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres are permitted to deliver authorized recreational and skill building programs.

Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014

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 for no more than one period of **up to 3 consecutive hours** of care each day for 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) and up if they are not operated at a person's home and are:

- Operated by the local service system manager, a municipality, a school board, a First Nation or the Métis Nation of Ontario;
- Operated by a member of the YMCA or by a member of Boys and Girls Clubs of Canada;
- An Ontario After-School Program funded by the Ministry of Heritage, Sport, Tourism and Culture Industries (MHSTCI);
- 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 a member of a provincial sport organization or multi-sport organization recognized by MHSTCI, where the program's activities are related to the sport or sports promoted by the organization;
- Operated by an MHSTCI agency or attraction (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.

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 school work
- 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 for the provision of after-school programs for kindergarten students or older, 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 to 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.

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.

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 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 school board 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-year olds 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 Nations with tuition agreements, 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)