

# COVID-19 PUBLIC HEALTH GUIDANCE FOR DAY CAMPS

This document provides supplemental guidance to reduce the risk of introducing and spreading COVID-19 in day camps and it should be used in conjunction with complete guidance provided in the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Guidance: Summer Day Camps](#), along with existing day camp procedures, guidance, resources, and systems. This guidance does not apply to licensed child care centres or agencies licensed under the Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014.

**The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving rapidly. This guidance is subject to change. Please visit the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) [website](#) regularly for updates and additional guidance.**

## DECIDING TO OFFER DAY CAMP PROGRAMS

Day camps provide short-term programs that provide care and learning opportunities for children of all ages. It is critical that we keep children in day camp programs safe and healthy. Plans and procedures must be in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 to campers and staff. Each day camp setting is unique, and as such, careful consideration must be given to your ability to develop or modify the day camp to meet the required infection prevention and control measures when [deciding to offer day camp programs](#).

## PUBLIC HEALTH REQUIREMENTS FOR OPERATION

Day camps are permitted to operate if they can meet the requirements set out in the [Ministry of Health's COVID-19 Guidance: Summer Day Camps](#). In addition, SMDHU recommends the following local procedures and resources:

### Screening

All individuals, including children, parents/guardians and staff must be asked questions about symptoms and exposures upon arrival each camp day, this is referred to as 'screening'. A sample [screening tool](#) is available on our website. Consideration should be given to using an electronic screening process for screening prior to arrival at camp each day. When screening is done on site, screeners should take appropriate precautions when screening, including maintaining a distance of at least 2 metres (6 feet) from those being screened, or being separated by a physical barrier (such as a Plexiglas barrier). Daily screening results must be recorded and records maintained.

Post [screening sign](#) at all camper drop-off points.

### Management of individuals who develop symptoms of possible COVID-19

If a child or staff member fails a screen, they must be excluded from the day camp. Refer the individual to an [assessment centre](#) for testing for COVID-19. Contact SMDHU at 1-877-721-7520 ext. 8809 if a camper or staff member reports that they are positive for COVID-19. The health unit will provide specific advice on required control measures to prevent the potential spread and how to monitor for other possible infected staff members and children.

If a child or staff member becomes ill while at camp, the following immediate control actions are required:

- Separate a child, staff, or visitor who shows one or more [symptoms](#) compatible with COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, difficulty breathing, etc.) immediately from others into a supervised area until the person can go home. Refer the individual to an [assessment centre](#) for testing for COVID-19. They are to remain in self-isolation while awaiting test results. If they test positive, they will be instructed to remain in self-isolation for 14 days from symptom onset. If they test negative, they may return to camp once symptom-free for 24 hours.
- Anyone required to provide care to a symptomatic individual should maintain a distance of 2 metres (6 feet) apart if possible. It is recommended to have a supply of personal protective equipment (PPE) that includes at the least surgical/procedural masks and eye protection (goggles or face shield), as well as gloves and gowns if possible, to be worn by care-givers of symptomatic individuals. This is particularly important if the distance of 2 metres cannot be maintained. The symptomatic individual should depart camp as soon as possible.

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- Once the individual has left the day camp, clean and disinfect the space in which the person was separated to as well as any toys/equipment used inside or outside by the camper. Children/staff in the same room should be directed to wash their hands. Refer to [Cleaning and Disinfection for Public Settings](#).

The day camp must have protocols and parent agreements that outline expectations for staff, campers, and parents regarding screening, exclusion, and possible closure. The day camp must also have protocols in place to notify parents/guardians if their child begins to show symptoms of COVID-19 while attending camp, including the need for immediate pick up. If anyone is seriously ill and in need of immediate medical attention, call 911.

## Physical Distancing and Cohorting

The more people a camper or staff member interacts with, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. Infection spread can be slowed and more easily contained when people are together in smaller groups, called cohorts, where they remain with the same group throughout the day, every day.

- Operate camp programs by creating consistent cohorts of no more than 10 individuals:
  - Staff assigned to a group of campers should remain with that group until the session has completed. Staff plus assigned campers comprise of one camp cohort.
  - Limit mixing between camp cohorts if possible and keep cohorts together until the end of the session.
  - Staff should not be covering off lunches/breaks for staff outside of their assigned group/room.
  - No moving of rooms/campers during the session.
  - Staff should be practicing physical distancing in staff rooms, offices, etc.
  - For more information see the [CDC Considerations for Youth and Summer Camps](#).
- Spaces used for camp programs, indoor and outdoor, must allow for 4 square metres (2 metres in each direction) per person to allow for adequate physical distancing. Activities must promote physical distancing of at least 2 metres (6 feet) between cohorts, and between children within cohorts where possible..
- Safety from other hazards should not be compromised due to physical distancing and cohorting.

## Hygiene

- Perform proper [hand hygiene](#) (including assisting children with hand hygiene) on entry to the camp and regularly throughout the daily schedule;
- [Wash your hands regularly](#) with soap and water for at least 15 seconds and have an alcohol-based hand sanitizer for staff and campers;
- Ensure supplies for handwashing are supplied at camp and restocked regularly; and
- Ensure consistent practice of good respiratory etiquette – [sneeze and cough](#) into your sleeve, have tissues available.

## Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection

- In addition to standard cleaning protocols, [clean and disinfect](#) high touch surfaces including doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, and tabletops at least twice daily.
- All toys used at the day camp must be of a material that can be cleaned and disinfected (i.e. no plush toys, untreated wood) to increase frequency of cleaning and disinfecting of toys.
- Frequently clean and disinfect toys and equipment using a disinfectant with a [Health Canada Drug Identification Number \(DIN\)](#) and follow the manufacturer's instructions for use.

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## Face Coverings (Non-Medical Masks)

- Staff and campers should bring in their own face covering to wear when physical distancing cannot be maintained between cohorts, to help prevent them from transmitting COVID-19 if they are asymptomatic but infected.
- If staff or campers wears a face covering, they need to be used properly. The face covering must be disinfected or washed daily, carried in a plastic resealable bag and brought back and forth to program on a daily basis. When the face covering becomes soiled it must be removed and replaced with a clean one.
- The use of -face coverings can be challenging for some children.
- **Note:** Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:
  - Babies or children younger than 2 years old;
  - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious; and
  - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cover without help.
- When a camper has no symptoms of COVID-19 but is in need of care (such as toileting, first aid), staff should wear a face covering when possible.

## Drinking Water

- It is important for the day camp premises owner to flush both cold and hot water lines, and drain hot water tanks to remove stagnant water from their building's plumbing system.
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- Day camps with private water supplies must ensure water samples are taken before the opening of the day camp operation with tests from a licensed laboratory demonstrating results to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health (MOH). Further, water sampling should occur over the period of operation.

## BEST PRACTICES FOR CONSIDERATION

- Do not use water or sensory tables.
- Field trips are not recommended at this time. The only exception is that staff can take participants to the park, do walking trips, and go to outdoor fields, as long as physical distancing is maintained and staff are able to maintain appropriate supervision of participants at all times to ensure safety.
- Limit any non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible.
- Outdoor play at day camp sites is encouraged, in small groups in order to permit physical distancing.
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- Staggered arrival and departure times are recommended to maintain physical distancing.
- Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g. risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms) to campers using the facility.

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## PSYCHOSOCIAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR CHILDREN

- Pay attention to children's feelings and reactions, and let them know that it is okay to be concerned.
- Reassure children about their personal safety and health, and the many things they can do to stay healthy (e.g. hand washing, cough/sneeze etiquette, stay home when sick, keep clean).
- Let children know they can ask questions and make sure that the information provided is suitable for their age level.

Please contact the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit if you have any questions at 1-877-721-7520, Monday to Friday 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

## REFERENCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *CDC Youth Programs and Camps Decision Tool*. Retrieved from: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-programs-decision-tool.html>
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- American Camp Association. (2020). *Camp Operations Guide Summer 2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.acacamps.org/resource-library/coronavirus/camp-business/camp-operations-guide-summer-2020>
- Ontario Ministry of Health. (2020). *COVID-19 Fact Sheet: Talking to Children About the Pandemic*. Retrieved from: [http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019\\_talking\\_children\\_guidance.pdf](http://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/publichealth/coronavirus/docs/2019_talking_children_guidance.pdf)

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