

COVID-19 Handbook for Parents

We have created this handbook to help parents to understand the precautionary measures and enhanced protocols we will be following for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre will be abiding by all restrictions as governed by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit. Guidance has been obtained from the Ministry of Education's *Operational Guidance* document as well.

Safety and well-being of the children, families, and staff of Mahmowenchike is always priority number one. Parents can rest assured that we are taking every necessary and reasonable precaution that we can to keep their children safe in our care.

Drop-off Procedures

At the time of drop-off, things are going to look a little bit different for the time being.

- Parents will not be allowed into the centre. Parents are, however, encouraged to check in the program window if they are worried. We also encourage phone calls throughout the day because we recognize that this drop-off procedure is going to look quite a bit different than it has in the past and may cause some anxiety.
- Drop-off procedures may look slightly different depending on which site or program your child attends, but a more detailed sheet will be attached with that information to make sure you're fully informed.
- Parents and guardians will be required to fill out the online screening tool (<https://covid-19.ontario.ca/school-screening/>) each morning before arriving at the centre. A screening staff member (typically the Site Supervisor) will be at the door and will confirm you have filled it out, take your temperature as well as your child's temperature with an infrared thermometer, and if the screening is negative, then a second staff member, referred to as the "runner" will escort your child to their designated program space where they will be met by their educators and their friends.
- Children's belongings must be limited to necessities each day. Items will be limited in their ability to go back and forth between the centre and home so if your child has a security blanket or stuffed toy that they would like to bring for rest time, those items will need to be left at the centre once sent and will be laundered accordingly.
- Children and adults will need to sanitize or wash their hands when entering the building.

Screening

Each morning prior to attending the centre, all parents and staff will need to complete the COVID-19 Screening Tool.

The COVID-19 Screening Tool is available online or can be done on paper when you arrive. We ask that you do it online if you are able to do so prior to attending the centre. This will reduce congestion at the door and wait times in the mornings.

If a parent, child, or staff member fails the screen (answers yes to any question or indicates any new symptoms), they must leave or abstain from attending the centre and the TBDHU must be contacted for further direction.

Pick-up Procedures

Pick-up will look slightly different for each site and each program. Specific procedures will be provided for the program(s) your child(ren) attends.

- Parents will still be unable to enter the centre.
- When programs are indoors at the end of the day, parents will typically need to ring the bell or call to let staff know they have arrived and a staff member will get the child ready and bring them to the door for pick-up.
- Where possible, programs will end the day outside to make pick-up easier for parents and staff. When programs end the day outside, parents will be able to approach the playground but must maintain 2 metre separation from the other children and staff.

Illness and Exclusion

Where a child becomes ill at the centre throughout the day, the following procedure will be followed:

- 1) The child will be isolated from the rest of the group and taken to the staff room/supervisor's office where they will be supervised one-on-one by the Site Supervisor until picked up (space permitting). The supervising staff will be wearing PPE (face mask and face shield or safety goggles) and will maintain a distance of 2 metres where it is possible. This does not mean the child won't be comforted as needed, particularly when upset. If tolerated, the child will be encouraged to wear a mask (only when over the age of 2 years old).
- 2) The parent will be contacted to pick up their child immediately. It is imperative that parents make every effort to come get their child right away to prevent possible spread of infection.
- 3) The TBDHU will be contacted and provided with the child's name, date of birth, symptoms, parent's name and contact information, and the last date they attended the centre.
- 4) Once the child is picked up, the room will be completely cleaned and disinfected.
- 5) Other children and staff members who had more than 15 minutes of exposure to a child or staff member who became ill are considered close contacts and will self-monitor. If a child or staff member is tested and confirmed positive for COVID-19, the entire group will need to be sent home and self-isolate or be tested. Direction will be taken from the TBDHU in making these decisions.
- 6) Where a child or staff member is tested for COVID-19 and the test is returned negative, the individual must be excluded from the program until 24-48 hours (dependent on the symptom) after symptom resolution.

- 7) Where a child or staff member is tested for COVID-19 and the test is returned **positive**, the individual must be excluded from the program until 14 days has passed after the onset of symptoms and clearance has been received by the TBDHU.

All TBDHU guidance will be followed regardless of any contradictions to these steps. The TBDHU will follow up with families as required.

Where a staff becomes ill throughout the day, best effort will be made to find a suitable replacement but in the case that a supply staff cannot be found that is eligible to work in that program, parents may need to be called to pick up their children. Every effort will be made to avoid this situation.

Despite the statement in the current screening tool that a child may return once they are 24 hours symptom-free after vomiting and/or diarrhea has occurred, Mahmowenchike will follow our internal policies and require a child to be 48 hours symptom-free in this case.

Group Sizes and “Cohorting”

Each program is considered their own “cohort” and cohorts cannot mix with each other. As such, there will be no time throughout the day where programs will combine. This means that each program may have their own designated starting time based on the schedules of the children enrolled. Families will need to adhere to their predetermined schedule to ensure that staff are available. If families are arriving before their drop-off time, there may not be an educator there to receive your child and you will need to wait until that program’s educator’s shift begins.

We will be operating at full capacity and regular staff-to-child ratios.

Programs can still utilize reduced ratios at drop off (7:30 AM to 9:00 AM), pick up (4:30 PM to 5:30 PM) and rest time (12:30 PM to 2:30 PM) which allows for staff to work alone with more children than regular staff-to-child ratios while children are transiting to and from the centre and while children are resting.

Program	Regular Staff-to-Child Ratio	Reduced Staff-to-Child Ratio (may apply during drop off, pick up, and rest time)
Infant	1:3	1:3
Toddler	1:5	1:8
Preschool	1:8	1:12
School Age	1:15	1:15

Program Set-up and Physical Distancing

Programs may be set up differently than they have been in the past to encourage physical distancing. While we will make a concerted effort to encourage physical distancing, we also

recognize that children need to socialize and play with their friends, so it won't always be possible. This is the reason for separating groups of children into cohorts – children in cohorts are permitted to play together because they are considered a group of close contacts.

Strategies that may be used include (but are not limited to):

- Spreading children out into different areas at times where they would typically be in close contact, such as mealtimes and dressing times;
- Getting dressed for outside and coming inside in smaller groups to ensure there is more space for getting undressed/redressed;
- Spreading cribs and cots out and, where that is less feasible, staggering children head-to-toe or toe-to-toe;
- Incorporating individual activities or activities that encourage more space between children; and
- Using visual cues to promote distancing.

In some cases where playgrounds are shared spaces, they will not be used by both groups at a time without a barrier for separation.

Visitors

There will be no non-essential visitors in any program or on-site. This does not include special needs resource staff (including the Resource Consultant and Support Partner staff).

Where possible, video and telephone interviews will be used to interact with families, rather than in person.

Ministry staff and other public officials, such as the fire marshal or public health inspectors will be permitted on-site as usual at any reasonable time. They will need to be screened and will need to wear appropriate PPE.

Where it is necessary for a visitor to come on-site, they will be tracked on a tracking log daily, including their arrival and departure times.

Child Care Fees during COVID-19

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre is required to abide by all regulations as set out by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Ministry of Education. As such, children are required to be kept home when sick and should they demonstrate symptoms that could be indicative of COVID-19, they must be provided with the option to be tested for COVID-19 or remain home for 14 days after the onset of symptoms and be 24 hours symptom-free before returning, unless there is an underlying cause or pre-existing condition.

Should a child develop symptoms of COVID-19, they are to follow the procedure below:

1. Inform the Site Supervisor of their location immediately, indicating that their child has developed symptoms that could be indicative of COVID-19.
2. Contact the TBDHU for consultation and, if necessary, to book a COVID-19 test. The child must still be 24 hours symptom-free to return to the centre.
3. Should a parent refuse to have their child tested for COVID-19, the child must be excluded for 14 days after the onset from symptoms and must be 24 hours symptom-free prior to returning.
4. Parents should keep the centre updated on test results and their child's anticipated return date.

If a child should be required to be absent due to COVID-19 symptoms, it will be treated as an illness and families will be charged child care fees in accordance with our existing Childcare Fees Policy. This measure is required to ensure the continued viable operation of our centre. Subsidized families will be charged in accordance with DSSAB's policies.

Cleaning and Sanitary Practices

Hand Hygiene

All staff will be required to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately upon entry into the building. Handwashing and hand sanitization will take place throughout the day at key prevention points, such as before preparing or serving food, after diapering children, cleaning up messes, or wiping noses, after going to the washroom either with a child or alone, and after touching their face, sneezing, or coughing.

Children's hands will also be washed throughout the day. If a child is old enough to wash their own hands, they will be encouraged to do so but they will be supervised to ensure they are washing them thoroughly. Children will be told when to wash their hands, shown how to wash their hands if they don't know or have forgotten, and will be reminded that handwashing will help to keep them from getting sick or spreading germs.

For children who are too young to wash their own hands, the staff will wash them for them. At all possible times, this will be done at a sink. If a sink is not available, face cloths can be used but must be changed after each use and cannot be shared between children under any circumstances.

Children will wash their hands when they arrive, in between activities and when transitioning to a new activity, before eating or drinking, after they use the washroom or have their diaper changed, and after wiping their nose or coughing or sneezing into their hands.

Cleaning

Enhanced cleaning measures will be taking place daily as set out by the TBDHU (exact details can be found in the TBDHU's Policy and Procedures for Re-opening Childcare Centres). At Mahmowenchike, we use a bleach and water mixture when cleaning surfaces. The bleach and water mixtures will be enhanced to ensure effectiveness against COVID-19.

All frequently touched surfaces will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice a day including doorknobs, light switches, counter tops, crib rails, chairs/table tops not used for eating, toilet handles, toilet seats (unless visibly soiled), faucet handles, handwashing sinks, bathroom countertops, and electronic devices.

Shared items such as phones, iPads, attendance binders, etc. will be cleaned and disinfected between each user.

Child and staff washrooms (including any high touched surfaces within them) will be cleaned and disinfected twice a day as well as at the end of each day.

Toys and Equipment

Items used in programs will be designated to that program room and will not be shared. If it is absolutely necessary to share toys among programs, they will be completely cleaned and disinfected before switching hands.

We will be keeping the toys and equipment at a minimum during COVID-19 to ensure that we are able to clean and disinfect everything as per the TBDHU's schedule – twice a day, with mouthed toys being cleaned after each use.

There will limited use of plush toys or toys and appropriate laundering/cleaning or isolation procedures will take place.

We will be discontinuing group sensory play, but programs may engage in individual sensory play. Each child will receive their own bag of playdough or individual bin of water and it will be discarded as necessary. Children will need to wash their hands before and after playing with the playdough.

Sleep Equipment

As always, a cot or crib will be designated to each individual child and will not be shared between children. Bedding will be cleaned once per week unless visibly soiled, in which case they will be cleaned more often. Cots will be cleaned and disinfected daily.

Cots and cribs will be spaced out where possible. Where it is less feasible, children will be placed to sleep head-to-toe or toe-to-toe.

Masks and PPE

- All staff working with and interacting with children in the program will need to wear a medical mask and a face shield or safety goggles while indoors and outdoors.
- Staff have been provided with medical masks, reusable face shields, reusable safety goggles, disposable gowns, disposable gloves, and reusable aprons for use where needed.

- Children in grades 1 and above must wear facemasks (non-medical or cloth) when at the centre, both indoors and outdoors.
- Children younger than grade 1 are not required to wear facemasks, but are encouraged to do so.

Personal Item Storage

- Where possible, cubby spaces will be spaced out to ensure physical distancing.
- All cubbies will be cleaned and disinfected daily after the children have left for the day.
- Personal items will not be able to be brought back and forth from the centre to home and vice versa. Blankets or comfort items for rest time will need to stay at the centre and be laundered according to the program's schedule.

Sunscreen

The centre will not be able to provide communal sunscreen bottles for children. Parents will need to provide individual, labelled bottles of sunscreen for application throughout the day.

Travel Outside Northern Ontario

During the COVID-19 global pandemic, Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre urges all families and employees to avoid international travel. If international travel is necessary, the COVID-19 Screening Tool, as well as local public health guidance, must be followed to ensure safety for all children, families, and staff members attending our centre.

It is strongly recommended that travel be avoided as much as possible and it is essential that public health recommendations are followed. If you have traveled anywhere outside of the Thunder Bay area, self-monitor, continue screening daily, and if any symptoms develop, self-isolate immediately, inform Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre and follow the instructions outlined in the Thunder Bay District Health Unit website for access testing.

Mahmowenchike Family Development Centre will continue to implement all health and safety protocols as outlined by the Thunder Bay District Health Unit and Ministry of Education to ensure the safety of individuals entering our centre.