

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES CIRCULAR

Date: August 12, 2021

CIRCULAR NUMBER: COVID-19 2021-45

To: All Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) facilities

Subject: Mask Use in ELCC Facilities and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
Distribution

Type: For information only

Effective Date: Immediately

This circular provides further clarification regarding mask use in ELCC facilities following the changes in public health orders on August 7, 2021.

The public health requirements and recommendations for licensed ELCC facilities, including mask use, are outlined in the *Coronavirus (COVID-19) ELCC Practice Guide (updated May 2021)*. These requirements remain in effect.

The use of medical-grade disposable masks by staff and home-based providers and reusable cloth masks for children in Grade 4 or higher continue to be required in ELCC facilities.

Effective September 7, 2021, mandatory mask use in child care facilities will no longer be a public health requirement. The *Coronavirus (COVID-19) ELCC Practice Guide* is being revised to reflect the changes as indicated in COVID-19 Circular 2021-44 Upcoming Changes to Public Health Recommendations for ELCC.

However, the use of masks continues to be recommended by public health for all indoor spaces, and is strongly recommended for those who are not fully vaccinated, including children under 12 years of age. In addition, Dr. Brent Roussin, the province's chief public health officer, has stated that businesses are allowed to require masks to be worn in their establishment.

Public health orders set out minimum standards and independent businesses, including ELCC facilities, have the option to establish their own policies. The board of directors or the owner/operator of a licensed ELCC facility has the authority to establish a policy requiring the use of masks by staff, children, parents and/or visitors in their facility.

If an ELCC facility develops a policy requiring masks, facility management should give consideration to the exceptions to mask wearing and other issues discussed in the Personal Protective Equipment section in the *Coronavirus (COVID-19) ELCC Practice Guide* (updated May 2021).

Continued Distribution of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Recommendations on mask use are expected to change over time based on respiratory disease activity. Public health will continue to monitor closely and will adjust guidance as needed. ELCC facilities need to plan for and be ready to implement additional measures if required.

It is recommended that all ELCC facilities maintain a supply of PPE regardless of whether or not the facility establishes a mask policy, as children and staff may be required by public health to wear a mask during certain periods of time in the future.

Medical-grade masks and eye protection provided by the Manitoba government will continue to be available to ELCC facilities. **This circular also serves as a reminder that it is important for child care centres to pick up their PPE orders during the timeframes specified for their region.**

For the latest provincial public health information on COVID-19, visit: www.manitoba.ca/covid19.

ELCC providers are encouraged to check the Department of Families COVID-19 Notices and Circulars at <https://www.gov.mb.ca/fs/covid-circulars.html> on a regular basis for specific ELCC sector updates. This is the same content as you will receive electronically from the ELCC Program.

We continue to appreciate the ongoing commitment of the ELCC sector to providing quality care, while also ensuring that precautions are taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We would like to extend our sincere thanks for your efforts throughout this difficult time.

If you have any questions, please email cdcinfo@gov.mb.ca or call 204-945-0776 or 1-888-213-4754.

Thank you,
Early Learning and Child Care Program