



# COWICHAN PRESCHOOL ASSOCIATION COVID-19 POLICIES & PROCEDURES

## Introduction

This document outlines the major changes to Cowichan Preschool's regular Policies & Procedures, in order to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Our new Policies & Procedures are already being put in place and will take full effect in September 2020, when the Preschool reopens. Cowichan Preschool's COVID-19 Policies & Procedures aim to align directly with COVID-19 guidelines set forth by the Province of BC, WorkSafe BC, and BC's Child Care licensing agencies and authorities.

While it's important to note that traditionally we have an "open door" policy for parents and guardians at Cowichan Preschool, this policy will have to change for some time, in order to meet the new requirements. We want to reassure our families that our teachers and staff will do as much as we possibly can to ensure that your child's educational, social, psychological and emotional needs are met while they are in our care. With young, preschool-aged children, we recognize that there will be times when they need to be comforted, soothed, and hugged, particularly if preschool is a new experience for them. Separation anxiety is a real struggle for many children and parents too, so we ask that our families do their best to prepare themselves and their children for the changes that lay ahead. Please do your best to talk to your children about our new "outside" dropoff procedure, keeping their distance from others, keeping hands to themselves, covering their mouths when coughing or sneezing, and regular hand washing while at the Preschool, in order to make the transition as smooth as possible for all.

**Note:** Our COVID-19 Policies & Procedures are subject to change at any time, whenever deemed necessary by our Board of Directors & Staff. We will do our utmost to keep our policies clear and consistent, to avoid creating confusion and distress to families. However, there may be times when things need to be adjusted to meet with any new guidelines that are handed down to us from the afore-mentioned authorities.

## Access to Cowichan Preschool

First and foremost, Cowichan Preschool staff, children, parents, and caregivers must not enter Preschool grounds if they have symptoms of COVID-19 or have travelled outside of Canada in the last 14 days or have been identified by public health as a close contact of a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19. **Cowichan Preschool Staff will administer daily checks with the help of parents and caregivers to confirm that their child does not have symptoms of common cold, influenza, COVID-19 or other respiratory disease.**

## Pick Up and Drop Off

- Drop off and pick up will occur outside of Cowichan Preschool's front doors; parents and guardians will not be allowed to enter the building
- Drop off times will be staggered; one at 8:45 am and one at 9:00 am
- Pick up times will be staggered; one at 11:45 am and one at 12:00 pm (for morning program), one at 3:15 pm and one at 3:30 pm (for full day program)
- Physical distancing of at least 2 metres must be maintained by parents and guardians during all interactions at Cowichan Preschool
- Social distancing markers and signage will be placed on building exteriors and fences, to ensure physical distancing when parents and guardians line up for drop off and pick up
- Cowichan Preschool staff will administer a temperature check to each child at the time of drop off, using a contactless thermometer, with results for each child recorded on the sign-in sheet

### **Children Exhibiting Symptoms**

- Staff can refuse entry to children who do not pass the thermometer test or appear to be exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, common cold, influenza, or other respiratory diseases
- If a child is allowed entry at drop off, but then begins to exhibit symptoms later on while at the Preschool, staff are required to call the child's parents or guardians, to arrange for an immediate pick up
  - Cowichan Preschool will have a designated isolation area for a child who begins exhibiting symptoms, where a staff member will isolate with the child until the parent or guardian arrives to pick up
- Cowichan Preschool families will be guided to seek medical expertise if their children are exhibiting symptoms, via BC's COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool, by dialing 8-1-1 for a phone assessment, or through an appointment with their family physician or other qualified healthcare practitioner

### **Staff Exhibiting Symptoms & Staff Contingency Plan**

- Similarly, our staff will be required to notify the Preschool immediately if they begin exhibiting symptoms of COVID-19, common cold, influenza or other respiratory diseases while at home, and instructed to stay at home.
- If a staff member begins exhibiting symptoms while at the Preschool, they will be required to self-isolate within the designated area of the Preschool, until it becomes possible for them to be sent home (e.g., as soon as another staff member (or members) are available to cover any gaps in child supervision)
- Staff will also be guided to seek medical expertise if they are exhibiting symptoms, via BC's COVID-19 Self Assessment Tool, by dialing 8-1-1 for a phone assessment, or through an appointment with their family physician or other qualified healthcare practitioner
- Cowichan Preschool is actively working on a Staff Contingency Plan, to ensure that we are able to cover any staffing shortages, to the best of our ability, should any current

staff be instructed to stay home until they are cleared to return to work by a healthcare professional, or until any necessary 14 day self-isolation periods are over

- This plan includes growing a base of substitute ECE providers who are adequately certified to step in as teachers and care providers, in the event of a staffing shortage
- If, for any reason, Cowichan Preschool is not able to provide an adequate number of substitutes in the event of a staffing shortage due to illness, the Preschool may have to declare a temporary closure, until all staff are deemed healthy and cleared to return to work

### **“Our Day” - Split Classes (3s and 4s)**

Cowichan Preschool will split up the morning half of the day (which is when we have our largest volume of children - up to 18), into two separate classes. The groups will be split based on age (a 3 year old group and a 4 year old group), and they will rotate between indoor and outdoor spaces in the mornings. Each group will spend 1.5 hours inside and 1.5 hours outside, which aligns with our current “Active Play” policy. In general, our outdoor space will be much more utilized, as per the recommendations from the Province, with gazebos being installed for extra coverage outdoors. **It is increasingly important that parents/guardians send their children to the Preschool with adequate “all-weather” clothing including rain-proof jackets, rain-proof pants, hats, and gloves and spare clothes to change into after outside play.** Cowichan Preschool will stagger each group’s timings to ensure physical distancing. Further details on how the split classes will work:

- Each group will be supervised by one teacher and one support worker
- Support workers will stay in the same group year round, but teachers will rotate around groups at the start of each week so that they get to know both the 3 and 4 year old groups
- Teachers will be equipped with walkie talkies to ensure ease of communication while they are separated between the inside and outside spaces
- 4 year olds arrive at 8:45 am;
  - Morning Program 4 year olds leave at 11:45 am
  - Full Day Program 4 year olds leave at 3:15 pm
- 3 year olds arrive at 9:00 am;
  - Morning Program 3 year olds leave at 12:00 pm
  - Full Day Program 3 year olds leave at 3:30 pm
- 4 year old morning snack at 10:30 am
- 3 year old morning snack at 10:45 am
- Lunch for Full Day students (no more than 8 children total) at 1:15
- Afternoon snack for Full Day students (no more than 8 children total) at 2:30

### **Children’s Activities & Learning Space**

- Cowichan Preschool staff are coming up with creative ways to adapt our learning space (indoor and outdoor) and daily learning activities in order to meet physical distancing requirements
- Wherever possible, children will be instructed to keep a safe distance from one another during all activities, with the help of markers (such as masking tape on floors, pictures, etc.) and creative reminders from teachers
- We will be limiting the use of fabric toys and supplies
- The use of shared or communal supplies, such as sensory/touch displays, arts and craft supplies, play dough, etc. will be significantly altered or in some cases eliminated
- Books and reading will still be a big part of our day, but books will not be shared by the children; they will be made accessible only to teachers for story time

### **Meals and Snacks**

- Morning snack times will be staggered between the split classes (see timing mentioned above in “Our Day” section)
- Full Day children will bring their own water bottle and lunch/lunch box (clearly labeled with their name on both items)
- Morning children will not bring water bottles but will have regular water breaks with disposable cups provided by the Preschool
- “Shared” or “Family Style” snack and meal service will be eliminated; all snacks and meals will instead be distributed to children in individual containers by Preschool staff using gloves and tongs
- All food stored at the Preschool will be properly covered and/or refrigerated at all times
- Sharing of food, drink or water bottles by children and staff will be strictly prohibited
- Children will not be allowed to participate in food preparation
- Cowichan Preschool will establish a procedure for receiving and handling parent and caregiver provided food items and containers (e.g., lunch boxes), which will involve a designated a tabletop/countertop receiving area that is regularly sanitized. Food provided by parents and caregivers will be stored with the child’s belongings or, if refrigeration is required, it will be kept in an area designated for the child’s grouping or cohort, where applicable.
- The Preschool’s reusable dishware, glasses, and utensils will be cleaned and sanitized in our dishwasher after each use

### **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**

- Cowichan Preschool will have hand hygiene stations set up at the entrance to the building, inside the building, and outside in the playground/outdoor learning space.
- We will provide alcohol-based hand sanitizer at these stations where a sink is not available and will ensure there is an adequate supply of hand washing supplies and alcohol-based hand sanitizer

- Preschool staff and children, and others are required to wash their hands or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately upon entering Cowichan Preschool, while also keeping hand sanitizer out of the reach of children and supervising its use.
- Posters will be placed around the Preschool, to remind staff and children about regular hand washing and proper methods for doing so
- Our staff will be required to wash their hands regularly throughout the day, including:
  - When they arrive at the Preschool and before they go home
  - Before and after handling food (raw, cooked or pre-packaged) or feeding children
  - Before and after giving or applying medication or ointment to a child or self
  - After changing diapers
  - After assisting a child to use the toilet
  - After using the toilet
  - After contact with body fluids (e.g., runny noses, spit, vomit, blood)
  - Before donning and after donning personal protective equipment
  - After cleaning tasks
  - After handling garbage
  - Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- Cowichan Preschool staff will support children to wash their hands regularly throughout the day, including:
  - When they arrive at the Preschool and before they go home
  - Before and after eating and drinking
  - After a diaper change
  - After using the toilet
  - After playing outside
  - After handling pets and animals
  - After sneezing or coughing
  - Whenever hands are visibly dirty
- Cowichan Preschool will provide education and direction to our staff and children to:
  - Cough or sneeze into their elbow sleeve or a tissue
  - Throw away used tissues and immediately perform hand hygiene
  - Not touch their eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands

## **New Protocols for Teachers & Staff**

### **Physical Distancing**

Cowichan Preschool staff will be required to maintain a distance of at least 2 metres from each other. Where this is not possible, for example when transferring a very young child from one worker to another, staff will plan and communicate the work task in advance to ensure that

time spent in close proximity is minimized. Our staff will also adhere to the principle of physical distancing where possible, by:

- Limiting the number of staff allowed in confined spaces; only one staff member allowed at a time in our kitchen and bathroom areas
- Forming a number of separate learning, play and meal areas in order to space children apart. Children who live in the same home do not need to maintain physical distance from each other.

**Note:** when dealing with young, preschool-aged children, hugging and comforting between a staff member and a child will sometimes occur, based on the child's needs and only when necessary. Whenever possible we will be minimizing the frequency of direct physical contact with children.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- Cowichan Preschool will have multiple toy bins on site, in order to easily collect toys that have been used by an individual child and need disinfecting at the end of each day
- We will remove toys from the Preschool that have surfaces that are not easily cleaned, such as stuffed animals
- As is our usual policy, we ask that parents and guardians do not allow their children to bring personal comfort items with them to the Preschool (e.g., stuffed animals).
- We will remove unnecessary items from the Preschool to reduce surfaces that could become contaminated.
- We will identify all common areas (e.g., washrooms) and frequently-touched surfaces (e.g., door knobs, cupboard handles, light switches, faucet handles, tables, chairs, toys) and develop and implement a cleaning and disinfection schedule/procedures in accordance with the BC CDC's Cleaning and Disinfectants for Public Settings document.
  - General cleaning/disinfecting of the Preschool will occur at least once a day
  - Frequently-touched surfaces will be cleaned/disinfected at least twice a day
- We will regularly machine-wash blankets, face cloths, towels, aprons, and bibs between uses by different children
- Cowichan Preschool has a supply of winter coats, hats, scarves, gloves, etc. for families who occasionally forget to send an item to school with their children; in the event a child needs to borrow an item of clothing from the Preschool for the day, those clothing items will be collected and placed into the laundering bag at the end of the day, for machine washing
- We will empty garbage and recycling containers daily at a minimum.
- If a staff member or child leaves the Preschool due to symptoms of COVID-19, our staff will clean areas those individuals were in, including surfaces they may have touched, immediately upon their departure.

- We will maintain an adequate supply of cleaning and disinfection products and materials.

**Note:** due to a severe bleach allergy of one of our staff members, the use of bleach will be strictly prohibited inside Cowichan Preschool. Alternative COVID-19-approved disinfecting products will be used for cleaning instead of bleach.

### **Staff Use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)**

- COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings states that personal protective equipment, such as masks and gloves, are not needed beyond those used by staff as part of regular precautions for the hazards normally encountered in their regular course of work
  - As such, the use of face masks by Cowichan Preschool teachers and staff, is not mandatory and will be left up to those individuals as a personal choice
  - Hand washing and sanitizing will be the primary method of control for staff, but gloves will be worn by staff at meal times and cleaning/disinfecting times

### **Other Methods to Control Risk**

- Cowichan Staff will limit the sharing of supplies and equipment wherever possible (e.g., pens, telephone, tablets, computer mouse) between workers; where this is not possible, those items will be wiped down after each use
- Staff will ensure that children’s belongings are stored separately, through the use of our pre-existing cubbies
- Whenever possible, we will limit visitors and “outside” adults to the Preschool; as such we will not be taking on ECE Practicum Students for the time being
- School field trips and other typical Cowichan Preschool community events (such as fundraisers) may also be limited and altered/adapted to comply with physical distancing guidelines and other important practices for slowing the spread of COVID-19
- Our usual “Open House” for new families, will be converted to a digital experience using photos and possibly videos, rather than in-person visits inside the Preschool
- Our “Gradual Entry” practice will also be reviewed and adapted to ensure that it complies with COVID-19 protocols and guidelines
- As much as possible, we will limit the distribution of physical/paper files and documents to our families and will opt for digital announcements, newsletters, etc. whenever we can

## **Closures & Ongoing COVID-19 Concerns**

Cowichan Preschool recognizes the warnings from our provincial health authorities that a second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic is a possibility. As such, we will continue to monitor the situation closely and respond quickly to any significant events or changes. We will always follow the recommendations of our provincial government, health authorities and local school districts in the event that another school closure becomes necessary in our region.

**Last updated: June 10, 2020**