



Backgrounder: Child Care Support for Essential Workers Responding to COVID-19

Why is child care considered an essential service?

The continued availability of licensed early learning and child care programs is critical for ensuring essential workers in the Northwest Territories (NWT) can continue providing services to residents of the NWT throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency, including healthcare services.

The Chief Public Health Officer (CPHO) of the NWT is recommending licensed early learning and child care programs in the NWT stay open during the COVID-19 public health emergency wherever possible.

The operation of early learning and child care programs is considered safe and encouraged under the following health advice:

- Early learning and child care programs should require staff and children to follow healthy [respiratory](#) and [hygiene](#) practices as explained on the [HSS website](#).
- Children and staff returning to the NWT from overseas and other parts of Canada must [self-isolate](#) for 14 days.
- All sick children and staff should be sent home, even if they have not travelled.

Why don't school closures extend to licensed early learning and child care programs?

The circumstances surrounding child care programs are different than is the case with JK-12 schools. Many early learning and child care programs have fewer children than JK-12 classes. A significant factor in the recommendation to cancel JK-12 school classes was the fact that many school staff were on holiday and out of the territory during March break, and as a result large numbers of school staff would have been required to self-isolate.

Will licensed child care programs continue to be inspected?

Monitoring of existing licensed early learning and childcare programs continues as an essential service throughout the COVID-19 public health emergency.

How are child care programs different from play dates or other gatherings?

The CPHO is recommending NWT residents avoid all non-essential interactions. Play dates and gatherings, such as get-togethers or public events, are considered non-essential. Licensed early learning and child care programs, including family day homes, are considered essential services because they are critical for supporting families of young children working in essential service positions.