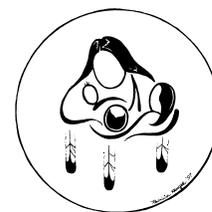


Considerations for Continuity of Safe Care During COVID-19 Pandemic Conditions



BC Aboriginal
Child Care Society

The BC Aboriginal Child Care Society (BCACCS) is a Centre of Excellence for Indigenous early learning and child care (IELCC). We are committed to nurturing excellence through community outreach, education, research and advocacy, to ensure every Indigenous child in BC has access to spiritually enriching, culturally based, high quality early learning and child care services.

This resource sheet offers ideas and considerations for community leadership and IELCC programs who may decide to provide continued and/or alternative child care supports and services to families and communities during pandemic conditions. IELCC program educators and staff are valuable community assets, uniquely positioned to collaborate with elected leadership, health partners, and community stakeholders to support community preparedness and response plans.

Before considering the suggestions below, it is essential that IELCC programs become familiar with their local community pandemic plan, protocols and structures. Pandemic response requires extensive collaboration among partners. This may include Chief and Council, a designated local pandemic authority organizations that serve children and families, and public health partners such as the Public Health Officer and/or Chief Medical Officer of the First Nations Health Authority.

It is also prudent for IELCC programs to develop a health and safety plan to ensure that every effort is made to reduce the transmission of the COVID-19 virus among staff. Staff who are immunocompromised should be supported to maintain their isolation and to work from home. Educators and staff should follow public health guidelines to maintain physical distancing (keep two meters apart); limit the number of staff/educators working together in the same space; practice extra-vigilant handwashing (and the use of hand sanitizer); ensure the use of cough and sneezing etiquette; and consider wearing facemasks, especially if delivering packages.

BCACCS is developing further resources to support communities that choose to reopen their programs to offer emergency child care to essential staff, and/or children and families with exceptional need. Please sign up for [enews](#) and visit our [website](#) for updates.

Resources with important advice about keeping safe, available funding, and other types of support are available through the following websites:

- [First Nations Health Authority \(FNHA\) - Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#)
- [BC Ministry of Children & Family Development Response to COVID-19](#)
- [Canada - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society \(BCACCS\)](#)
- [Fraser Health](#)
- [Interior Health](#)
- [Island Health](#)
- [Northern Health](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health](#)



Outreach to Families/Community Members

To help reassure and support families and community members, educators and staff can provide outreach. Educators and staff are resourceful, resilient and creative and are well equipped to develop strategies for on-going support and service. Taking the time to plan and organize will assist to ensure that work is safe and successful.

Complete a community needs assessment:

- Create or update your family (and Elders with whom you may be connected) contact list and note details about their preferred method of communication (phone, email, social media).
- Survey existing household resources (e.g., food, internet, computers/tablets, learning materials, etc.).
- Identify your most vulnerable families and their needs. Ideally you would prepare supports and resources for all the families in your program, maybe even your community, but knowing who has the greatest need will help you support those who need it most.
- Identify local resources (e.g., food bank, medical clinic, safe house, available cultural supports) and potential funding supports.
- Identify, document, and create a plan to close gaps in family and community supports.

Organize resources to be delivered to families and Elders:

- Connect with Elders and offer to pick up and deliver their groceries and/or prescriptions.
- Consider making [face masks](#) for Elders and families using sew or no-sew methods.
- Prepare food/supply parcels. Consider including:
 - o A selection of healthy and easily prepared foods (e.g., cheese strings, yogurt, fruit, vegetables, canned soup) and possibly water, depending on local conditions;
 - o Necessities like toilet paper, facial tissue, hand sanitizer, and diapers;
 - o Pandemic specific supports, such as thermometers, quarantine signage, gloves, hand washing sheets, dry erase tablets and markers, soap (bar), spray bottles, and bleach;
 - o Information about local emergency contacts for medical, mental health and family violence supports;
 - o Cultural/spiritual items (e.g., cedar brushing supplies, smudging materials, medicine bags, medicinal teas, bear salve, notes with further guidance from Elders or Knowledge Keepers);
 - o A friendly note.

Considerations for deliveries:

- Use hand sanitizer between each delivery.
- Phone in advance to ensure someone is home.
- Knock on the door, then step back to maintain physical distance while parcel is collected.

Considerations for financial support:

- Help families apply for government financial supports, like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB), by providing information sheets and help over the phone.



Coordinating communication:

- Maintain regular connections with children and families by calling, sending letters/emails, or through social media.
- Consider assigning a group of families for each educator/staff to contact daily.
- Email a daily/weekly list of fun activities children can do at home.
- Increase your social media presence (e.g., share activity ideas, messages from the teachers, videos, etc.).
- If possible, create visible messages outside the children's homes (e.g., chalk drawings, painted rocks, fence signs, etc.).

Tools for connecting

Figure out what tools work best to connect with your families and community, and use those. Examples are listed below.

Messaging, Voice and Video Call Tools

- Phone
- WhatsApp
- Google Hangout
- FaceTime
- Messenger
- Skype
- Zoom
- GoToMeeting

Social Media Tools

- Facebook
- Pinterest
- Instagram
- Snapchat
- Twitter
- YouTube
- Vimeo

Supporting Children's Learning

First Nations and urban Indigenous service providers may have decided to close programs to keep children and families safe. Even though the programs may be closed to direct care with children, it is important to keep their routines consistent and support their continued learning. Parents play a critical role in ensuring the continuation of learning. Educators and staff can stay connected and support learning by providing ideas, resources, and innovative online programming at home.

Consider creating offline resources:

- Create a sheet of land-based activities for families (connect with Elders or knowledge keepers for ideas).
- Send home small drum-making or rattle kits, and provide online instructions for families.
- Consider putting together and delivering kits with learning materials:
 - o Pencil crayons/crayons, glue stick, scissors, tape, paper
 - o Activity sheets, colouring pages
 - o Instructions and supplies for small crafts or mini maker projects
 - o Garden kit with instructions, containers, soil, seeds

Consider creating online resources:

- Research and share age-appropriate learning or activity resources for children.
- Send emails or post ideas on social media, daily or weekly.
- Provide or record online circle time, language classes, dance classes, etc.
- Provide or record online visits with Elders.



Support children's connections with program staff and the community:

- Invite children to create messages or pictures for Elders and offer to deliver them.
- Offer to organize calls between Elders and children using online tools listed above.
- Invite children to create cards or pictures for their teachers and staff.
- Invite children to make signs, hearts, messages, etc., for essential workers (or friendly messages about staying safe) and post where visible from outside.
- Suggest families participate in a 7:00pm recognition of the work going into reducing the impact of the pandemic (essential workers, health workers, chief and council, friends, family and community members and especially the contributions of the children) by standing on their balconies or outside their front doors and banging drums or pots and pans.

Staff Development and Planning

During “normal” times, programs are very busy and it can be difficult to find time for curriculum development, administrative tasks, and facilities upkeep. Consider using this time to catch up on all the work that is hard to do under regular circumstances and can be done at home, if your program has closed. Use online platforms to involve all staff, if possible. This can help build teams and ensure your staff and program will be ready to provide top quality service and learning opportunities for children and families.

Suggestions for curriculum development/resources:

- Review/develop curriculum.
- Update resources (e.g., felt boards, visuals, etc.):
 - o Review, refresh, replace missing pieces
 - o Consider making duplicates of shared or popular resources
 - o Create wish list for new resources
- Refresh the learning environment:
 - o Consider changing space layout
 - o Refresh materials
 - o Create new provocation areas
 - o Refresh learning centres
- Consider planning for summer programs:
 - o Research possible field trips
 - o Plan calendar
 - o Prepare summer program flyer
 - o Prepare summer resources
 - o Contact Elders to discuss summer visits
- Develop documentation/learning stories:
 - o Post in classroom
 - o Email to families
 - o If you have consent, post on social media or share with community
- Conduct program evaluation (e.g., ECERS).
- Review classroom book collection:
 - o Edit collection (consider donating old books to families)
 - o Repair damaged books
 - o Consider labeling all books with program name
 - o Make a wish list for new books
 - o Create story baskets or felt stories inspired from books or local stories (with permission)
- Review and update documents/resources for children with special needs
 - o Review care plan with ASCD consultants and families
 - o Create visuals to support communication



Suggestions for administrative tasks:

- Update policies and procedures.
- Update parent handbooks, welcome packages, and similar materials.
- Organize and streamline old files and resources.
- Check insurance policies for program, building, and vehicles.
- Ensure you follow directions for unoccupied buildings (e.g., frequency of inspections)

Suggestions for safety review:

- Review and restock first aid kits, replace expired items. Make sure to check vehicle kits as well.
- Inspect building and playground/yard, and repair or address any safety concerns.
- Review and/or update fire drill procedures and documents.
- Check fire extinguishers (in program and in vehicles).
- Check emergency preparedness supplies (shelter in place).
- Review and/or update emergency preparedness plan and contacts.
- Update children's emergency cards.
 - Remove all departed children's cards.
 - Ensure all current children have complete cards, with both sides filled out and signed by a parent.
- Check all epi-pens to ensure they are not expired
 - Send home in case they are needed.
 - Ensure proper documentation is completed.
- Review and/or update all emergency cards for staff.

Clean and organize inventory and repair indoor spaces/supplies:

- Clean, sanitize, and organize kitchen area.
- Deep clean, wipe down, and sanitize all materials, containers, equipment, etc.
- Clean out storage areas.
- Purchase or fix storage bins and replace old bins.
- Organize art and craft supplies, replenish if needed.
- Update photos and cubbies.
- Touch up or paint walls and equipment.
- Wipe or clean curtains, blinds, and windows.
- Repair, donate, or plan to replace older toys and equipment.
- Create a wish list for new items.
- File and organize all resources.

Vehicles:

- Deep clean program vehicles, inside and out.
- Clean car seats.



Clean, organize, inventory and repair outdoor spaces:

- Clean outdoor storage.
- Build/repair/clean outdoor play equipment and play structures.
- Safety check of the building and outside play areas (e.g., wasp removal).
- Prepare garden and landscaping, if applicable:
 - o Build garden boxes
 - o Plant seedlings/new plants
 - o Refresh/top up soil
 - o Clean out greenhouse
- Clean yard and playground spaces (e.g., power wash, sweep paths, paint, etc.).
- Clean and refresh sandbox sand and/or crash materials (e.g., woodchips, pea gravel).
- Review, repair, replace sand toys and small outside manipulative items.
- Ensure outside water is dumped or drained to reduce mosquitos.

Online training and professional development:

- Review ECE certification expiry dates to ensure staff meet all renewal requirements.
- Apply for renewals if necessary.
- Research free online learning and professional development for staff (see BCACCS website for ideas).
- Contact your education department for upcoming training.
- Consider encouraging all staff to access training related to mental well-being (both to support staff during pandemic crisis and to assist them in supporting families).
- Approach language teachers about providing online lessons for staff.
- Provide resources to keep staff informed of new policies/requirements during pandemic period.
- Organize a professional reading club for your educators, choosing a book, an article or a chapter and meet once per week virtually to discuss and review how it connects with your practice (e.g., Empowering Pedagogy for Early Childhood Educators).

Ideas for Managers

Managers may be required to keep up with regular duties and new demands presented by the current pandemic conditions. Additional work may be needed to support educators and staff, as well as keeping regular communication with leadership, funders, Licensing Officers, and outside agencies. Frequent communication and transparency are critical at this time.

Suggested communication strategies for managers:

- Maintain connection with Chief and Council (or designated leaders of pandemic planning) and/or board and management staff of urban-based service providers.
- Monitor all incoming and outgoing communication:
 - o Develop/maintain newsletters/communications to community and families.
 - o Regularly update and respond to program social media (Facebook, etc.).
 - o Work with communications department if available.
- Have regular staff meetings, online or through conference calls.
- Keep in contact with delegated agencies and the Ministry of Children and Family Development (MCFD) to organize or learn about supports for families.
- Keep in touch with funders and government organizations.



Maintain regular management functions:

- Coordinate staff and duties.
- Keep up with all administrative tasks.
- Update staff files.
- Conduct performance reviews.

Considerations for funding:

- Review/renew funding agreements.
- Connect with current funders to find out about any changes to funding agreements.
- Complete required reports.
- Research and apply for emergency, additional, and new funding opportunities (new opportunities are coming out frequently e.g., [Temporary Emergency Funding](#)).

We know that educators and staff are very innovative. If you have come up with additional ideas to facilitate your support of families and communities, we would love to hear about it. Please send your ideas and success stories to: communications@acc-society.bc.ca. Let us know if we may share your experiences with others.

Resources with important advice about keeping safe, available funding, and other types of support are available through the following websites:

- [First Nations Health Authority \(FNHA\) - Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [BC Centre for Disease Control \(BCCDC\)](#)
- [BC Ministry of Children & Family Development Response to COVID-19](#)
- [Canada - Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society \(BCACCS\)](#)
- [Fraser Health](#)
- [Interior Health](#)
- [Island Health](#)
- [Northern Health](#)
- [Vancouver Coastal Health](#)

If you any questions or are looking for more information please email reception@acc-society.bc.ca

