



Introduction

This document is for employers of youth summer camps (day-camps and overnight camps). It provides an overview of recommended controls that will help reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19. It can also help workers, volunteers, camp participants, their parents or caregivers, and visitors to understand how to protect themselves and others from the spread of COVID-19.

In all cases, guidance from [local public health authorities](#) and your [jurisdictional Occupational Health and Safety \(OHS\) regulator](#) must be followed. Stay up to date on current legal requirements as the pandemic situation evolves. Meet your legal occupational health and safety obligations by doing everything reasonably possible under the circumstances to protect the health and safety of your workers.

Refer to current [guidance documents](#) from the [Public Health Agency of Canada \(PHAC\)](#), including [COVID-19: Organized summer activities for children and youth](#). National and local camp associations also provide COVID-19 information resources.

For guidance that applies to employers and workers in all sectors, first refer to the CCOHS [COVID-19 Resources](#) documents, including [Protect Yourself and Others from COVID-19](#), [COVID-19 Health and Safety Planning for Employers](#), [COVID-19 Prevention for Workers](#), and [COVID-19 FAQ](#).

Summer camps vary widely in size, setting, activities and services, as well as the participants who attend. A variety of additional considerations have been provided in this tip sheet. Assess your facility and operations and apply the ones that fit best.

Consider the Risks

Each workplace is unique. Employers need to perform a COVID-19 risk assessment for their specific workplace, job roles, and activities (routine tasks and in-person interactions). Involve the workplace joint health and safety committee or representative, OHS coordinator or manager, and union (if applicable) in the risk assessment process.

Examples of areas for summer camps to review include worker and participant facilities, drop-off and pick-up, group activities and education, sports and athletic equipment, food service, congregate housing, transportation, emergency and medical first-aid response, and camp maintenance.

The risk of [COVID-19 transmission](#) is increased with:

- Close proximity (less than 2 metres) and interactions with people from outside of the immediate household, including close-range conversations.
- Direct contact (e.g., shaking hands, hugging, kissing).
- Longer and more frequent in-person interactions.
- Crowded places and large gatherings, both indoors and outdoors.
- Generation of respiratory droplets and aerosols (e.g., when coughing, sneezing, speaking, singing, shouting, and during strenuous activities that increase breath rate).
- Poor ventilation in closed spaces (e.g., accumulation of virus particles in the air).
- Inadequate personal hygiene practices or facilities.
- Contaminated surfaces and shared objects (fomites).
- Congregate housing (e.g., dorms, bunkhouses) and transportation (e.g., buses, etc.)
- High levels of COVID-19 cases in the local community.
- Inter-regional travel, including from areas with COVID-19 Variants of Concern (VOCs).

Risk of transmission increases further when several of these risk factors occur at the same time.

Here are example questions that can be asked to help identify COVID-19 risk factors and appropriate controls for your workplace:



- What are the main work areas, job roles, and routine activities?
- Are camp activities primarily indoors or outdoors?
- Where and when do workers interact with other people?
- How close are the interactions? Are there tasks where persons must be close? (i.e., note when and where physical distancing is not possible)
- How often and how long are the in-person interactions?
- How crowded is the workplace?
- Are workers and participants sleeping in shared or congregate housing?
- Are workers sharing camp or private vehicles? Are they transporting camp participants?
- Do camp activities include day trips or outings?
- Do activities involve intense physical effort with increased or forceful breathing, and/or loud verbal instructions and music (shouting, yelling, singing)?
- Do workers stay at one workstation or do they travel throughout the indoor facilities and outdoor grounds during their shift?
- Are workers or participants attending multiple day-camp programs (e.g., from several different camp providers)?
- Are participants from one geographical region, or from several?
- Are buildings ventilated passively (by opening windows and doors) or mechanically (by ventilation systems)? Is indoor ventilation sufficient?
- Do workers and participants have easy access to personal hygiene facilities (e.g., running water, soap, and hand sanitizer)?
- How are equipment and tools used in the workplace? Are they shared between people?
- How often and by which method are surfaces and objects cleaned and disinfected? How effective are the disinfectant products against coronaviruses? What are the potential chemical hazards to workers, participants, and the environment?
- Do people have the knowledge and resources they need?
- Could language barriers or comprehension level impact the ability of people to understand the risks and follow the transmission control measures?
- Are there personal factors that could make control measures more difficult to implement and follow (e.g., based on their health, physical ability, age and maturity, or other socio-economic and demographic circumstances)?
- Are you able to assess if a person may be sick or has been exposed, and rapidly take appropriate actions?
- Are any people at risk of more severe disease or outcomes from COVID-19?
- Are sick leave policies adequate to support worker isolation and quarantine?

Control Measures

Once the COVID-19 transmission risks have been identified and evaluated, the employer must implement multiple COVID-19 [control measures in a layered approach](#), including public health measures ([community](#) and [personal](#) preventive practices). The occupational health and safety [hierarchy of controls](#) (i.e., elimination, substitution, engineering, administrative, and personal protective equipment) can be used as a tool to evaluate how effective a control will be, from most to least effective. No single control measure is completely effective, so it is important to layer several at the same time.

A workplace [COVID-19 safety plan](#) documents the control measures you have put in place to protect workers and camp participants from the COVID-19 transmission risks. The plan supports existing business continuity processes such as [risk assessment](#), [hazard control](#), change management, and [emergency response](#). A written plan may be legally required by the jurisdiction in which you operate. It may need to be posted, and available upon request from an inspector. Reach out to regional authorities for details on what must be included in the plan.

When implementing COVID-19 control measures, assess the potential impacts to existing infrastructure, activities, as well as worker and participant safety. Make sure you do not create new workplace hazards. Update existing policies and procedures as needed to incorporate COVID-19 transmission control measures. Communicate the risks and controls to workers and participants. Continue to evaluate how effective the controls are and make changes if



needed.

See the sections below for recommended control measures.

Communication and Training

Communication and training are essential to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Workers have the 'Right to Know' about potential workplace hazards, including COVID-19 transmission risks and how to protect themselves and others. Participants need instructions to understand what is required of them when at camp. For recommendations on how and what to communicate about COVID-19, refer to CCOHS "COVID-19 Communication and Training"

Vaccination

- Encourage workers to get the vaccine once available in your jurisdiction.
- Provide scheduling and financial support for workers to attend local vaccination clinic appointments, if these occur during work hours.
- Some camp participants may be too young to receive the vaccine.
- Continue to follow COVID-19 precautions for your jurisdiction, even if fully vaccinated.

Refer to the Government of Canada "[Vaccines for COVID-19](#)", "[The facts about COVID-19 vaccines](#)", and the CCOHS "[COVID-19 Vaccines](#)" for detailed information about vaccination.

Screening and Contact Tracing

- Screen all people before they enter the building, including workers, participants, parents and caregivers, visitors, inspectors, or contractors.
- Create your own list of questions or use a generic [checklist](#) form.
- Screen for the [symptoms of COVID-19](#) and potential exposure incidents.
- During drop-off, ask parents and caregivers to wait until their child has completed the screening process and is allowed into the camp facility, before departing.
- Consider requiring a pre-arrival quarantine period for all workers and participants. Plan for what to do if a worker or participant must leave an overnight camp mid-season. They may need to quarantine again before rejoining the camp.
- If readily available and feasible, consider implementing routine [rapid testing](#) of all consenting workers and participants (with parental or guardian consent for those under 18 years of age) as an additional active screening measure. Be prepared to [respond to rapid test results](#).
- Inform workers about the national [COVID Alert App](#).

Refer to the Government of Canada "[COVID-19 testing, screening and contact tracing](#)" and the CCOHS "[Active Screening for COVID-19](#)", for detailed information on how to perform screening, and what questions to ask.

COVID-19 Response Plan

If a **worker** or **participant** in the workplace is identified as having symptoms, or has potentially been exposed to COVID-19:

- Act accordingly to findings, even if symptoms are mild.
- If a person does not pass the screening process, do not allow them into the camp.
- If already at camp, do not allow them to continue in group activities (work or play).
- Call **911** if symptoms are life-threatening.
- Immediately notify the participants parent or caregiver.
- Have the ill person and anyone providing them with direct care wear a medical (surgical) mask. If unavailable, they should properly wear a well-constructed, well-fitting non-medical mask.



- Make every effort to keep them isolated in a well-ventilated space until they can go home safely or undergo medical assessment.
- Plan for how a sick person will be transported home safely, ideally in a private vehicle. Discourage them from using public transit, taxi, or rideshare.
- Workers or participants who live on-site should be isolated in a separate living area, and have necessary supplies delivered to them by the employer, if they cannot return home immediately.
- Suggest that they stay home and contact their health care provider or local public health authority if they develop symptoms or symptoms worsen.
- Clean and disinfect any areas, surfaces, and objects the sick person may have used, and air-out those rooms.
- Develop procedures for contacting local public health authorities for further advice in the event of a positive COVID-19 case.
- If the case is work-related involving a worker, additional notifications may be required, contact your jurisdictional [OHS regulator](#) and [worker compensation board](#) for guidance.
- Complete an incident report and begin an investigation.
- Adopt flexible leave policies that enable workers to stay home if needed:
 - Communicate that sick workers should not come to work
 - Designate a process for workers to immediately notify their supervisor
 - Provide support to workers who are off
 - Do not penalize workers who must take leave to isolate or quarantine
 - Give advances on future sick leave
 - Provide information on government [economic support resources](#)

If there is an outbreak, the camp employer or administrator may be asked to provide contact tracing information to the local public health authority. During screening, record the name, contact information, date, and time each person was present at the camp. Refer to the CCOHS "[COVID-19: Contact Tracing](#)" for how to further prepare for and support contact tracing efforts.

Refer to the CCOHS infographic "[Responding to COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)" for more information.

Physical Distancing

Make changes to where the work is done, to help eliminate in-person interactions:

- Workers whose jobs can be performed remotely should work from home e.g., office and support staff not directly involved in on-site activities.
- Provide [accommodation](#) to workers at [higher risk](#) of severe disease or outcomes from contracting COVID-19 due to existing medical conditions.
- Use remote communication technologies such as video/teleconferencing when possible.
- Consider offering camp programs online if in-person activities are not possible.
- Manage bookings and cancellations online or over the phone. Discourage walk-ins.
- Limit or reschedule visits to your workplace by external contractors and suppliers.
- The entire camp or specific services and facilities may require temporary closure, due to jurisdictional lockdown measures or as determined by the risk assessment. Plan and prepare for these disruptions.

Make changes to physical infrastructure (buildings, furniture, and equipment):

- Use larger well-ventilated rooms when more space is needed to spread people out.
- Restrict people from entering zones they do not perform work in or need access to (does not apply in emergency situations). Secure doors and gates if needed.
- Establish one-way walking routes in corridors and stairways to minimize cross traffic.
- Use signs and floor markings (at least 2 metres apart in all directions) to indicate where people should stand and walk.



- Consider closing or limiting indoor sit-down eating areas, while expanding outdoor eating areas with well-spaced picnic tables and seating.
- Rearrange, remove, or block-off workstations, furniture, sinks, and equipment.
- Place sleeping cots and mats as far apart as possible. Orient the cots or mats “head to toe” to distance the children’s faces.
- Position desks and activity stations to all face the same way.
- Setup widely spaced (at least 2 metres apart) outdoor activity and seating areas (e.g., at sports fields and courts, campfire circles, beaches, docks, picnic shelters, amphitheatres, etc.) if safe to do so. Make each area large enough for comfortable and safe use. Use weather resistant materials to mark the area edges (e.g., pylons, brightly coloured pegs, field marking powder, rope, flagging tape), taking care to not create tripping hazards.

Makes changes to how, when, and where people interact:

- Implement and enforce an indoor and outdoor physical distancing policy.
- Limit the number of persons gathered at one time, indoors and outdoors. Do not exceed the occupancy and gathering limits set by your jurisdiction.
- Keep all in-person interactions **few, brief**, and from the **greatest distance** possible (at least 2 metres).
- Job tasks and activities that require workers to be in close contact with others should be modified if possible or suspended.
- Discourage unnecessary physical contact such as hugs, handshakes, and high fives.
- Discourage people from congregating during breaks and between program activities, including in outdoor break areas and weather shelters.
- Stagger participants pick-up and drop-off times to reduce crowding at entrances and exits. Ask caregivers to not arrive early or to congregate.
- Discourage use of carpooling, public transit, and rideshare services.
- Plan for how people will maintain physical distance while evacuating or sheltering-in-place in the event of an emergency. Prepare for exceptions to distancing guidance, e.g., when providing emergency first aid or rescue.

Make changes to workers schedules:

- Adjust daily staff levels to have the fewest people in the workplace, while making sure tasks can be completed safely, and maintaining service standards (staff-to-child ratios).
- Stagger shift start/end and break times to reduce crowding at punch-clocks and breakrooms.
- To reduce the potential daily exposure time of each worker, reduce the length of long shifts (e.g., 10+ hours), or rotate them to tasks that are not public-facing.
- Incorporate extra time into workers’ schedules for them to complete their regular tasks safely, while also meeting physical distancing, personal hygiene, and cleaning-disinfection requirements (e.g., without rushing or cutting corners).

Consider implementing a **cohort** system (i.e., dedicated groups of workers or participants):

- The use of cohorts limits the severity of any potential COVID-19 outbreak and helps with contact tracing.
- Cohorts can be scheduled to work, participate in program activities, attend meetings and training, take breaks and mealtimes, ride on group transportation, and share living accommodations together.
- Make sure that different camp cohorts do not mingle together.
- For younger children who require more assistance with following COVID-19 precautions, consider using smaller cohorts.
- Schedule adequate time between program activities in indoor places. Air-out the space before the next cohort enters, also minimizing interactions between cohorts as they arrive and leave.
- Minimize rotation of activity facilitators. Assign them to a single activity or cohort at a time, where possible.
- To help reduce community spread, encourage workers to only work at one job location, and participants to select a single day-camp program to attend.



- Workers and participants should minimize in-person interactions with people from outside of their immediate household, when at camp, home, or in the community.

Make changes to camp programs:

- Hold traditionally indoor activities outdoors, weather permitting (e.g., crafts, movies).
- Hold each group activity with the smallest number of participants possible. Consider offering more frequent but smaller groups instead of one large group.
- Choose to run non-contact activities or modify them to be non-contact.
- Have children face the same direction for as many activities as possible, and specifically avoid activities involving face-to-face positioning.
- For unstructured free-time periods, book time slots for use of popular equipment and facilities to reduce the chance of participants congregating while they wait
- Minimize field trips and excursions. If group transportation must be used, spread the passengers out (e.g., staggered seating, assigned seats, skip rows, etc.).
- Discourage yelling, singing, and chanting, which can cause infectious respiratory particles to travel for long distances.
- Singing is a high-risk activity that can project infectious respiratory particles long distances. Avoid singing wherever and whenever possible. Reduce the number of performers or use a solo artist if increased distancing or barriers between performers cannot be accommodated. Choose pre-recorded options for musical activities or sing outdoors with participants properly distanced.

Physical Barriers

- Install appropriately sized and positioned physical barriers at face-to-face interaction areas or between equipment that cannot be moved, where physical distancing of at least 2 metres between people cannot be maintained.
- Consider that young children may frequently touch and collide with barriers, so they might not be an ideal control measure in certain locations or situations. Barriers may need to be limited to locations where only adults interact, such as at a front reception desk or workers breakroom.

Refer to the CCOHS document "[COVID-19 Tip Sheet: Physical Barriers](#)" for detailed information on use and installation (dimensions, materials) of physical barriers.

Ventilation

- Poor ventilation has been linked to COVID-19 outbreaks by allowing the accumulation and transmission of infectious respiratory particles in indoor spaces.
- Continually ventilating indoor spaces will dilute and exchange the potentially contaminated air.
- Note that portable or ceiling fans and single unit air conditioners circulate the air without exchanging it or improving ventilation.
- Consult with a licenced heating ventilation and air-conditioning (HVAC) expert before making any changes to ventilation systems, or blocking airflow through indoor spaces (e.g., before installing physical barriers or subdividing rooms).
- Air-out rooms between activities.
- Make sure that air circulation or cooling fans are not directing air flow from person to person (e.g., aim the air stream away from people).
- Other ways can be used to help keep rooms cool, such as shutting off heat generating equipment when not in use, closing window blinds to create shade, or allowing fewer people into closed spaces at one time.
- If group transportation must be used, the vehicle cabin ventilation is at the maximum flow and fresh air intake settings (no re-circulation), and windows are opened (weather permitting).

Refer to the Government of Canada "[COVID-19: Guidance on indoor ventilation during the pandemic](#)" and the



Hygiene Measures

COVID-19 can be transmitted when contaminated hands or objects touch the mucous membranes of the face (eyes, nose, and mouth).

Promote good personal hygiene habits:

- Encourage [proper hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette](#).
- Post [hand hygiene](#) infographics in washrooms.
- Some participants may need additional supervision and help with hygiene and etiquette, such as younger children or those with special needs.
- Install enough handwashing stations and hand sanitizer dispensers to ensure easy access for all persons.
- If plumbing is not available (e.g., outdoors), rent a portable hand-wash station, or use a spouted water container and catch basin, with water, soap, and paper towels.
- Consider supplying a basic hygiene kit to each worker and participant (if age appropriate), containing such items as extra masks, individual hand-sanitizer container, tissues, and disinfectant wipes.
- Require workers wear freshly cleaned uniforms or clothes for each shift.
- If providing [laundry](#) service (e.g., workers and participants clothing and linens) follow the recommended precautions for handling soiled laundry.

Minimize contact with shared items and surfaces:

- Install automatic touch-free systems and objects where possible (e.g., card-tap sensors, motion-activated, timed, foot-activated, etc.) to reduce the number of high-touch surfaces.
- Do not allow people to share personal protective equipment (PPE), uniforms, face masks, cellphones, towels, or personal hygiene supplies (e.g., toothbrushes).
- Keep each camper's belongings separate. If they do not have lockers or desks, provide sealed bins or bags to store their personal items, footwear, and clothing. Remove communal coat storage areas.
- Do not share musical instruments such as woodwinds and brass (i.e., any instrument that is played by blowing air into it), the reeds and mouthpieces, or microphones. Other musical instruments may be used if they are made of durable materials that can tolerate cleaning and disinfection, such as metal, plastic, or solid/sealed hardwood.
- Provide each person or cohort with their own tools, equipment, and supplies if feasible.
- If items need to be shared, clean and disinfect between users, and perform hand hygiene.
- Consider creating individual activity stations that provide everything needed for the activity (e.g. craft supplies), that can be assigned to a single participant.

Discourage food and drink sharing:

- If providing food service, provide individually wrapped food servings, utensils, and condiments. Do not serve food and beverages buffet-style from communal containers. Do not share lunchroom eating utensils, plates, and glassware.
- Day-camp participants could bring their own bagged lunches and snacks.
- Vending machines with touchless payment can deliver pre-packaged, grab-and-go food and beverage options.
- Shut off water fountains or replace them with water bottle refill stations. Each person should have their own labelled water bottle. If there is a prolonged facility shutdown, make sure that all water systems are safe to use when reopening (e.g., flush out stagnant water, and perform potable water quality testing if required).

Cleaning and Disinfection

- Make sure that all disinfectants used are effective against coronaviruses. Refer to the Health Canada guidance for [hard-surface disinfectants and hand sanitizers](#). Verify that selected products have a drug identification



number (DIN) from Health Canada.

- Rural camps should also assess potential environmental impacts of chemical products on sensitive ecosystems.
- Routinely clean and disinfect work and public areas and frequently touched surfaces.
- Clean and disinfect activity equipment and other shared objects between each user (e.g., tools, sports and playground equipment, bicycles, boat paddles, musical instruments, craft supplies, etc.).
- Remind people to also clean and disinfect personal devices such as cellphones.
- Limit the use of materials that are difficult to clean and disinfect.
- Clean and disinfect group transportation vehicles between users (e.g., keys, steering wheel, gear shift, controls, vents, belts, seats, interior and exterior door handles, etc.).
- Consider creating dirty/clean or colour-coded signs to clearly indicate equipment or room status.
- Perform a deep cleaning of living accommodations between groups of campers.
- Make sure washrooms are cleaned more frequently, have running water, and are stocked with soap, paper towels and a plastic-lined no-touch waste container.
- Showers (e.g., small enclosed spaces with high moisture and heat levels) may need to remain closed for day-camps if they cannot be sufficiently aired-out and cleaned and disinfected between users. If showers are used, clean and disinfect them between each use. Allow time for droplets and aerosols to settle, and to air-out the shower stall before entering.

Refer to the Government of Canada website "[Cleaning and disinfecting public spaces during COVID-19](#)" and the CCOHS documents "[Cleaning and Disinfecting](#)" and "[Standard Operating Procedure: Disinfection of Touch Points](#)" for detailed information on cleaning and disinfecting.

Non-Medical Masks

- Follow the mask wearing requirements of your local public health agency and jurisdiction, including for [children and masks](#).
- Masks may need to be worn at all times, except during specific activities (e.g., eating, drinking, exercising, swimming, showering, or sleeping) if exempted by the local public health authority.
- Make sure that wearing a mask does not create new hazards such as from entanglement (moving equipment) or from open flames and sparks (campfires, candles, BBQ).
- Implement or update the workplace [heat-stress program](#), as mask wearing may increase physiological stress during high-exertion tasks.
- For some children, not being able to see an adults' face and mouth clearly may cause difficulties. Consider using a [clear mask](#).
- Staff may also wish to use eye protection (such as safety glasses, goggles, or a [face shield](#)) in addition to a mask, when in close physical contact with children or other people who are not wearing a mask.
- While non-medical masks are useful in reducing the spread of COVID-19, they are not considered Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) as they do not meet regulated testing and certification standards.
- There is great variation in the quality of masks available from retail sources. Consider providing appropriate quality single-use medical (surgical) masks or re-useable fabric non-medical masks to people in the workplace.

Refer to the Government of Canada "[Non-medical masks](#)", and the CCOHS "[Get the Facts on Masks](#)" for detailed information on how to properly wear and care for masks.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Refer to the Government of Canada "[Personal protective equipment \(COVID-19\): Overview](#)" and CCOHS "[Designing an Effective PPE Program](#)" for more detailed information about PPE.

- PPE is wearable protection that must meet regulated testing and certification standards.
- PPE includes such items as fit-tested respirators and surgical masks, eye protection (e.g., goggles, face shield), gowns, gloves, and safety footwear.

Summer Camps



- Continue to use PPE for existing occupational safety hazards and emergencies as directed by applicable laws.
- Employers should conduct a hazard assessment and make sure that workers have the correct PPE for the tasks and activities they are performing.
- Workers may need PPE if they are:
 - performing tasks that require them to be less than 2 metres from another person without a physical barrier (e.g., helping a child with an activity or task),
 - using cleaning and disinfecting products (refer to the manufacturers' safe handling instructions), or
 - providing emergency first-aid.
- Workers also need to be trained on how to properly use and care for their PPE.

If you or someone you know is in crisis, please contact your local hospital, call 911 immediately, or contact a [Crisis Centre in your area](#).



It is important that mental health resources and support are provided to all workers, including access to an employee assistance program, if available.

For further information on COVID-19, refer to the [Public Health Agency of Canada](#).

Note that this guidance is just some of the adjustments organizations can make during a pandemic. Adapt this list by adding your own good practices and policies to meet your organization's specific needs.

Disclaimer: As public and occupational health and safety information is changing rapidly, local public health authorities should be consulted for specific, regional guidance. This information is not intended to replace medical advice or legislated health and safety obligations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy, currency and completeness of the information, CCOHS does not guarantee, warrant, represent or undertake that the information provided is correct, accurate or current. CCOHS is not liable for any loss, claim, or demand arising directly or indirectly from any use or reliance upon the information.