

# COVID-19 Return to Overnight Camp Guidelines

July 14, 2021

These guidelines are meant to support organizations and facilities in their delivery of overnight residential camps when permitted to operate as per the [Public Health Order](#). For the purpose of this document, overnight camps include recreational camps regulated by Nova Scotia Environment and Climate Change as well as overnight residential camps hosted by organizations and/or facilities that are bringing campers together to be housed overnight in a camping setting.

The details in this document are subject to change based on direction from the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health. In the event of a localized outbreak or increased community transmission, providers and families should be aware that Public Health may need to stop or require modified delivery of these programs. Depending on the circumstance, this could happen with little notice.

All Nova Scotians must follow the [Public Health Order](#) issued by the Chief Medical Officer of Health and direction arising from the Order given under the authority of the Health Protection Act. Recreational camps must also comply with the [Guidelines for Recreational Camps](#) which establishes the minimum requirements needed for camps to meet compliance with the [Recreational Camp Regulations](#).

Programs can find examples of risk mitigation strategies in the foundational documents used to create this guidance: [Risk mitigation tool for child and youth settings operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#), [COVID-19 guidance for schools Kindergarten to Grade 12](#) and [Risk mitigation tool for outdoor recreation spaces and activities operating during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

## COVID-19 Testing and Vaccination

Staff and volunteers (and campers where possible) are encouraged to get tested for COVID-19 prior to arriving at camp when asymptomatic testing is available. Ideally the test would be taken 48 – 72 hours prior to arrival and negative results available.

All participants of overnight camp programs (including campers, staff, volunteers) who are eligible are recommended to receive at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine at least two weeks prior to arrival at camp.

## **Cohorts and Physical Distancing**

Overnight camp programs as defined in this document will operate with cohorts of up to 15 campers plus staff and volunteers. Cohorts will be assigned upon arrival and will remain consistent for the entire camp session including sleeping accommodation. Physical distancing within a cohort is not required, however direct physical contact should be avoided. Cohorts cannot intermingle and must remain separated by a minimum of 2 metres at all times.

Best practices to limit interactions between campers and reduce transmission of COVID-19 may include:

- Grouping campers from the same households in the same cohort where possible;
- Supporting campers to minimize direct physical contact (even within the cohort);
- Choosing activities that promote physical distancing between campers and staff;
- Programming the activities to include more outdoor activities wherever possible (including use of nearby outdoor green spaces and trails);
- Assigning cohorts to specific spaces, and using large, well-ventilated spaces as much as possible;
- When indoors, open doors and windows when it is safe to do so;
- Maintaining physical distancing between cohorts as they move through the facility and the outdoor space; and
- Using signage and visual cues (e.g. floor markings) to support physical distancing within the facility, in outdoor space, and at drop off and pick up location.

## **Daily Screening and Staying Home**

Families are required to screen their campers (and person dropping the camper off) at home prior to leaving for participation in an overnight camp using the [COVID-19 Daily Checklist](#). It is expected that campers (and family member) who are unwell do not arrive at camp, even if symptoms appear mild.

Upon arrival to camp, all staff, volunteers, and campers will be actively screened using the [COVID-19 Daily Checklist](#).

Campers and staff are expected to stay home if they are unwell, even if their symptoms are mild.

The most updated information can be found on the [COVID-19 Daily Checklist](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/restrictions-and-guidance/#self-isolation-requirements). For more details visit: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/restrictions-and-guidance/#self-isolation-requirements>.

## **Designating Drop-off and Pick-up Areas**

Camps should designate drop-off and pick-up areas outside to facilitate physical distancing between staff and adult family members. Minimize the number of individuals gathering at the drop off or pick up area by requesting one family member is designated for pick up and drop off. Stagger drop off and pick up times where possible.

## **Mask Wearing**

Staff are required to wear a non-medical mask while inside when within 2 metres of campers and other adults. Campers age 13 and older are also required to wear a non-medical mask inside. Masks can be removed when campers are eating or drinking, engaged in physical activity, while sleeping or where 2 metres of physical distancing can be maintained. Masks must be properly stored when not in use. Staff, volunteer and campers must replace their mask when it becomes dirty and have enough masks for the length of stay.

Staff and campers must follow mask protocols as outlined on the provincial coronavirus site <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/masks/>. A poster on how to wear masks safely can be found at: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Wearing-a-mask-poster-en.pdf>.

## **Hygiene Practices**

Frequent hand washing is important. Hands should be washed with soap and water for 20 seconds or an alcohol-based hand sanitizer (with a minimum alcohol concentration of 60%) should be used if soap and water is not available. If alcohol-based hand sanitizer is used with younger campers, staff should dispense the sanitizer into the camper's hand and observe while the camper thoroughly rubs in the sanitizer. Practice hand hygiene (wash hands or use hand sanitizer) often; including but not limited to immediately upon entry indoors, between activities, moving from indoor to outdoor space and vice versa, before and after eating, drinking and handling food, after cleaning, toileting, handling bodily fluid, sneezing, coughing, and blowing your nose. A poster on handwashing can be found here: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/Hand-Washing-Poster.pdf>.

Cough etiquette should be practiced by coughing and sneezing into the sleeve, or a tissue and discard immediately. Staff and campers should avoid touching their mouth, nose, or eyes. Avoid sharing personal items (i.e. backpacks, hats, lip chap, hair pieces, water bottles, toothbrushes, soap etc.)

Signage should be posted to encourage campers in these hygiene practices.

## **Cleaning**

Cleaning refers to the removal of visible dirt, grime, and impurities. Cleaning does not kill germs, but helps remove them from the surface. Disinfecting refers to using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces. This is most effective after surfaces are cleaned. Both steps are important to reduce the spread of infection. For a list of approved disinfectants refer to: <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/drugs-health-products/disinfectants/covid-19/list.html>.

General cleaning and disinfecting should occur daily. High touch surfaces (e.g. doorknobs, railings, tables, light switches, shared items, and toys, etc.) must be cleaned and disinfected frequently (at least twice daily). Shared items must also be cleaned and disinfected if mouthed or visibly soiled. Limit shared items to one cohort where possible. Outdoor toys and play equipment are to be cleaned and disinfected using your regular cleaning schedule.

Sensory experiences such as sand, water, slime, playdoh, if offered, must be provided in individual containers, which can then be cleaned and restocked after individual use.

In general, items that cannot be easily cleaned and disinfected such as rugs, curtains, dress-up clothes, stuffed animals and sensory play (unless the sensory play can be cleaned and disinfected between use or each camper is designated their own sensory play) must be removed.

Waste must be disposed of regularly and hands must be washed after waste removal.

## **Food & Drink**

Campers remain with their cohort for snacks and meals. Snacks and meals are to be served individually to campers by staff and food must be prepared by approved adults (such as staff or food service staff). Campers are not to engage in preparing food or family style eating where they serve themselves. Eating outdoors is to be encouraged. If eating occurs indoors, open doors and windows when it is safe to do so. Handwashing before and after eating is required for campers and staff.

## **Record Keeping & Absenteeism**

Records must be maintained of campers, staff, and essential visitors who are present including name, contact information, time of arrival/departure, which cohort they were in, which staff were with which cohorts etc. to facilitate contact tracing in the event of a confirmed COVID-19 case or outbreak.

## **Sleeping & Accommodation**

Individuals from separate households may share a room/accommodation while maintaining appropriate physical distance of 2m/6ft. Plan sleeping arrangements to minimize the number of individuals per room to as low as possible. At a minimum, spacing of 2m/6ft. between campers is required. Head to toe sleeping arrangements may be helpful in achieving the required distance between campers while sleeping. Do not wear masks while sleeping. Open windows and doors of sleeping accommodations (when it is safe to do so) to increase air flow within sleeping buildings.

## **Staff & Volunteers**

All staff and volunteers must adhere to the [Health Protection Order](#), even while away from work. This includes adhering the physical distancing, mask use, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette. Staff rooms and areas where camp staff and volunteers may gather should have the permitted gathering limit posted and have visual indicators on spacing to re-enforce physical distancing (i.e. if the maximum capacity for the room is 4, there should only be 4 seats in the area). It is essential that staff and volunteers always adhere to Public Health Measures. For example, when individuals are unmasked while eating, maintaining physical distance is important.

## **Managing Symptoms of COVID-19**

Campers or staff who develop symptoms consistent with possible COVID-19 infection should not remain at camp, even if the symptoms are mild. It is important that campers and staff are supported to report symptoms immediately and be protected from stigmatization. This may be accomplished by creating a safe space/opportunity for campers to report symptoms (privately if necessary) and active observation of campers by staff and volunteers.

A separate space should be designated for individuals who become symptomatic to isolate while awaiting pickup. This space should be located away from regular living or sleeping areas so as to provide quiet to the unwell camper. This space should be used for no other purpose. The isolation space should include space for sleeping in the event there is a delay in the camper leaving camp.

If a camper or staff develops symptoms consistent with possible COVID-19 infection, they should immediately wash their hands, don a mask if tolerated (medical mask if available, but non-medical mask is acceptable), avoid contact with other staff and campers and be isolated until a family member is able to pick up the camper. Establish procedures for safely transporting sick individuals that need to be transported off-site. Notify transportation (EHS) to alert them that the person has symptoms consistent with COVID-19 prior to their arrival at camp.

Staff supervising a camper with symptoms while awaiting pickup should also wear a mask (medical if available) and may choose to wear a face shield for eye protection if they are unable to maintain 2m / 6ft physical distance. They should perform frequent hand hygiene. Families should be advised to complete the online assessment: <https://covid-self-assessment.novascotia.ca/> or if unable to access the online tool, call 811.

Additional environmental cleaning should occur if a camper or staff develops symptoms, with focus on high-touch areas and areas where the staff or camper spent time. If concerned, contact your local [Public Health office](#) to seek further advice.

## **Outbreak Management**

In the event that a case of COVID-19 is confirmed to be connected to an overnight camp, Public Health will provide additional guidance including ensuring that appropriate supports are in place to coordinate the response. Public Health is responsible for case management and contact follow-up of all COVID-19 cases, and for determining the need for individual or public notifications.

Public Health actions and directions may include, but are not limited to:

- Contact tracing, which involves identifying contacts of a positive case and contacting those individuals
- Requesting records that identify cohorts/groups of staff, campers, and essential visitors in the day camp for a specified time frame
- Testing of staff and campers that may have been exposed to a positive case
- Enhancing environmental cleaning
- Assessing need for camp closure

Camp administration is expected to work with Public Health to ensure a prompt response to cases of COVID-19 that may have been exposed in or may have attended an overnight camp.

Camp administration must have a continuity plan in place in the event there is a laboratory confirmed COVID-19 exposure identified among staff, volunteers or campers. This may result in staffing challenges as a result of isolation and testing requirements informed by Public Health.

## **Communication with Families**

Families of campers will be provided information about preparing for overnight camp. This information will include minimizing potential exposures to COVID-19 prior to the arrival at camp such as maintaining physical distance, mask wearing, hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette as well as not having close contact with someone required to self-isolate. Explain what to expect if a camper shows signs of being unwell while at camp, including the expectation that the camper will be picked up from camp as soon as possible if required. Families will be informed they are required to screen the camper (as well as the person dropping off the camper) at home prior to leaving for participation in an overnight camp using the [COVID-19 Daily Checklist](#). Parents, guardians, campers and staff should be informed of the safety precautions that must be followed at camp. Where possible, limit face-to-face communication and provide information via phone or e-mail. Messaging should reinforce the requirements in this document (i.e. screening, hygiene, staying home when unwell, masking etc.) and provide any updated guidance.

## **Out of Province Travellers**

Individuals (staff, volunteers, participants) travelling or returning to Nova Scotia must follow all isolation and testing requirements that are in place upon entry to the Province. Please note that these requirements may change over time. More information can be found here: <https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/travel/>.

## **Resources**

Health Protection Act Order

[novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/health-protection-act-order-by-the-medical-officer-of-health.pdf)

COVID-19 Guidance for Musicians (Vocalists and Instrumentalists)

[novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Guidance-for-Vocalists-and-Instrumentalists.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Guidance-for-Vocalists-and-Instrumentalists.pdf)

COVID-19 Return to Recreation (Program and Facility) Guidelines

[novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Return-to-Recreation-Guidelines.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Return-to-Recreation-Guidelines.pdf)

COVID-19 Return to Sport Guidelines

[novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Return-to-Sport-Guidelines.pdf](https://novascotia.ca/coronavirus/docs/COVID-19-Return-to-Sport-Guidelines.pdf)