

August 24nd, 2021

This living document is meant to outline the policies and procedures that Edmonton Forest School Society (EFSS) has adopted, which we will endeavour to follow, to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 (And Variants) among participants, staff and community. The policies and procedures outlined in this document are based on guidelines provided by Alberta Health Services. A strong focus will be placed on screening, hand hygiene, sanitation, and education of participants, staff and community. Physical distancing will not be enforced as we believe it is not conducive to the forest school environment and does more harm with regards to mental health than risk of contracting COVID-19 in children when outside.

In this document you will find policies, procedures, reference documents, and a memorandum of understanding that all families, staff, volunteers or visitors must sign before participating in our programs. Please read it in its entirety.

*Please note: This is a living document that will be updated as the COVID-19 situation changes.*

## **POLICY:**

Prevention measures and mitigation strategies involving children should be related to risk with an emphasis on reducing physical contact versus physical distancing. In other words, strict physical distancing will not be emphasized to children in the forest school setting as it is not practical and could cause significant psychological and mental distress. Close interaction, such as playing and socializing, is central to child development and will not be discouraged. However, additional responsibilities are required of families and staff to prevent further spread of COVID-19 within the community.

## **Responsibilities of Families**

- All families will be required to read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding prior to attending one of our programs.
- All families must complete COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below) before the start of each program day. This will be emailed to families daily.
- Participants displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) will not be permitted to attend that day's program and will be required to follow AHS guidelines (testing and or Isolation)
- Participants displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be isolated in a safe place with a facilitator and must be picked up immediately.
- Participants who test positive for COVID-19 or who come in close contact with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 will not be permitted to return until negative test results are provided and 10 days have passed since exposure.
- Families will work with staff to ensure that the procedures listed below are followed.

## **Responsibilities of Staff**

- All staff will be required to read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding prior to facilitating one of our programs.
- All staff will be required to have full COVID vaccinations and be able to provide documentation in order to facilitate programs
- All staff must complete the appropriate online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire (see Screening &

Exclusion Protocol below) before the start of each program day.

- Staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) will not be permitted to facilitate that day's program and will be required to follow AHS guidelines (testing and/OR Isolation)
- Staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be sent home immediately. They will be required to follow AHS guidelines (testing and/OR Isolation) They will not be permitted to return until negative test results are provided and symptoms have subsided.
- Staff who test positive for COVID-19 or who come in close contact with a person who tested positive for COVID-19 will not be permitted to return until 10 days and negative test results.
- Staff will work with families to ensure that the procedures listed below are followed.

### Closures

- Programs will be cancelled without notice if staff shortages occur.
- Programs will be cancelled without notice if Alberta Health Services deems that the site be closed.
- Program cancellation can happen prior to or during a day's programming. In the event that program cancellation occurs during the day, families will be notified and asked to pick their children up immediately.

### Refunds

- Refunds will not be offered for those programs that are cancelled due to staff shortages or a decision by AHS
- Refunds will not be offered to individuals that are not permitted at forest school due to illness.
- Refunds will not be offered to individuals or families that fail to properly follow staff instructions during drop-off and pick-up and the duration of the program, or that create an unsafe environment for others.

### Communication

- All attempts will be made to protect the privacy of individuals.
- AHS will be notified by EFSS staff of any positive cases related to EFSS.
- AHS will be consulted when making decisions about who to contact, next steps, and whether or not to close, should a EFSS participant or staff test positive for COVID-19.
- Families are required to notify EFSS staff if any family member or close contact tests positive.
- Families are required to fill out the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire honestly (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below).

### PROCEDURES:

EFSS staff and families will work together to ensure that the procedures listed below are followed. It is our collective duty to create a community of trust, and to mitigate risk where possible. According to SickKids, the most effective mitigation strategies or controls are screening/exclusion, contact tracing, cohorting/small unchanging groups, hand hygiene, outdoor education, and cleaning/sanitizing, with PPE listed as least effective. These recommendations are reflected in our procedures below.

### Cleaning & Disinfecting Practices

- Frequently touched surfaces/items will be cleaned with a Health Canada approved hydrogen peroxide-based disinfectant at the beginning and/or end of each day at a minimum ( easy-to-clean loose parts, mud kitchen items, hammock and tools.)
- Disinfectant spray and clean rags/paper towels will be easily accessible to staff and participating adults for use,

as needed, throughout the day.

### Handwashing Practices

- A Health Canada approved alcohol-based hand sanitizer will be used to clean hands when entering the program, before snack/lunch and when leaving.
- Proper hand washing with soap will be completed when using the public washroom at Gold Bar Park Pavillion.

### Physical Distancing Measures

- An emphasis will be placed on reducing physical contact versus physical distancing.
- The physical distancing measures will be woven into our routines as naturally as possible by encouraging the use of our different spaces for experiences, spreading out within a space, and offering smaller groups as interest-based options (“Some of us want to visit the climbing tree, while others want to explore the pond”), etc.

### Masks

- Participants can wear a mask whenever they feel it necessary but are not required to wear one when outside.
- Staff are encouraged to wear a mask when working in close contact with participants both outside and inside GoldBar Park Pavillion.
- Visitors are required to wear a mask when they cannot keep a 2m distance.
- Participants, staff and visitors are encouraged to wear a mask when entering the washroom facility at Gold Bar Park Pavillion and are staying for a longer period of time (longer than a washroom break, such as having snack, lunch, reading a story)
- Participants, staff and visitors are encouraged to carry a reusable mask or may use one of the disposable ones in the First Aid bag.

### Mealtime & Drinking Water Procedures

- Participants and staff will be encouraged to clean their hands before and after each meal.
- Participants and staff will be encouraged to keep their **labelled** food and drink items away from those of other individuals.

### Safe Use of Indoor Spaces

- The use of face coverings will be required in the Gold Bar Park Pavillion (washroom) and in the following situations:
  - when seeking shelter during a thunderstorm;
  - when close/physical contact is unavoidable (i.e. when administering First Aid or consoling a child); and,
  - when the staff supervising a symptomatic child cannot keep a safe physical distance (see Management of Suspected Cases below).

### Additional Safety Procedures

- Personal belongings brought to forest school should be minimized. If brought to forest school, personal items should be labelled (i.e., backpack, clothing, water bottles, lunch pail, food containers, etc.).
- Our “no toys at forest school” policy remains in place during this time.
- Volunteers, visitors, and others who are not participants or staff will be required to read and sign the Memorandum of Understanding and complete the appropriate daily COVID-19 screening questionnaire (see Screening & Exclusion Protocol below) and provide vaccination records before they are permitted to be on-site.

**Screening & Exclusion Protocol**

- All individuals, including participants, parents/guardians, staff, volunteers and visitors must be screened, at home prior to arrival at forest school.
- Individuals displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) will not be permitted to attend that day's program and will be encouraged to get tested. Once negative test results are provided and symptoms have subsided, they may attend.
- Families are required to fill out the online COVID-19 Daily Screening Questionnaire honestly and promptly.

**Management of Suspected Cases & Exclusion Protocol**

- Participants displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be isolated in a safe place with a facilitator and must be picked up immediately.
- When there is a suspected case on-site, a 2-metre distance will be enforced, or masks will be worn, until that participant can be picked up. We will have clean masks of various sizes available for use should the participant not have their own.
- Staff displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school will be sent home immediately.
- AHS will be notified of all suspected cases, testing will be encouraged, and extra vigilance in terms of cleaning and disinfecting will be exercised.

**Testing & Exclusion Protocol**

- Symptomatic staff and participants will be referred for testing.
- Those who test positive for COVID-19 or come into close contact must be excluded from the program for 10 days.
- Should any participants or staff become infected, AHS will be consulted when making decisions about who to contact, next steps, and whether or not to close.
- Attendance records will be kept for each program day to aid with contact tracing in the event that an individual tests positive for COVID-19.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ (parent or guardian/staff/volunteer/visitor), have read, understood and agree to accept the additional responsibilities outlined above. I also understand and accept that although participants/families/individuals/staff will be encouraged to be mindful of physically distancing from others, maintaining physical distancing at all times is not guaranteed.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Child: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*You may be asked to sign this again should there be any major updates throughout the session.*