

DEPARTMENT OF FAMILIES CIRCULAR

**Date:** March 04, 2021

**CIRCULAR NUMBER:** 2021-10 - COVID-19 (replaces 2020-178 & 2020-179)

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**To:** Early learning and child care facilities, Community Living disABILITY Services (CLDS) shift-staffed residential care providers, and Child and Family Services (CFS) group care providers

**Subject:** Public health direction – self-isolation (quarantine) exemptions

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**Type:**  Policy

Procedure

**Effective Date:** Immediately

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In November 2020, public health officials advised that entire households must self-isolate (quarantine) while waiting for the COVID-19 test results of someone in their household. Exemptions were put in place for some critical professions.

On February 22, 2021, public health announced changes to the directive. In addition to self-isolating (quarantining) while a household member is awaiting COVID-19 test results, entire households now must isolate if a household member is deemed to be a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. The reason for this change is to prevent transmission from contacts who are asymptomatic cases and prevent variants of concern from spreading in the community.

**Exemption if a Household Member is Awaiting a Test Result or Has Been Deemed a Close Contact**

Public health officials have confirmed that critical service workers that provide direct care in the early learning and child care, CFS group care and CLDS shift-staffed residential care sectors (“staff members”) who have been directed to self-isolate (quarantine) because a member of their household is either awaiting a COVID-19 test result OR a member of their household has been deemed to be a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case, **can** continue to work if:

1. they wear a medical mask at all times and other personal protective equipment (PPE) as required. Any breaks where the mask is removed should be done in isolation of others.
2. they have no symptoms themselves and [self-screen](#) before each shift.
3. the household member is a close contact, the household member:
  - a. has no symptoms and is able to self-isolate (quarantine) within the home, AND
  - b. is not linked to a confirmed variant of concern case.\*

**\*Note:** Assuming the above conditions are met, staff members can continue working until it is determined whether the confirmed case is a variant of concern, as there may be several days of delay between a positive test result and confirmation that the case is a variant of concern.

However, staff members should still self-isolate (quarantine) when not at work.

**Note:** These exemptions do not apply in situations where the staff member themselves is awaiting a COVID-19 test result or has been deemed to be a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. In these situations, the staff member must self-isolate (quarantine) – there are no exemptions.

### **Self-Isolation Requirements when a Close Contact of a Confirmed COVID-19 Case Does Not Get Tested**

If a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case does not get tested for COVID-19, **and the confirmed case is not linked to a variant of concern**, the close contact and their household members must self-isolate for 14 days. If a staff member is a household member of a close contact (i.e., not a close contact themselves), the staff member can attend work as long as the close contact is not symptomatic and is able to self-isolate (quarantine) within the home, and the staff member themselves is not symptomatic and wears the required PPE while at work.

If a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case does not get tested for COVID-19, **and the confirmed case is linked to a variant of concern**, the close contact and their household members must self-isolate (quarantine) for 24 days. In this situation, staff members cannot attend work under any circumstances during the self-isolation period.

### **Home-Based Child Care Facilities**

Home-based child care facilities will be required to close for a period of time if a household member is awaiting COVID-19 test results, or is deemed to be a close contact of a confirmed COVID-19 case. However, they do not need to close if a child attending the program or their parent/household reports being a close contact or being symptomatic. These individuals should not attend child care while awaiting results, but the child care facility can remain open. If the home-based provider is subsequently named as a close contact, they would need to temporarily close at that point.

### **More Information**

Public health will advise individuals on additional exemptions if someone has been fully vaccinated or has had a recent COVID-19 infection in the past three months. Regardless of whether a staff member has been fully vaccinated or recently infected, they still need to wear required PPE while attending work.

As a reminder, staff must not attend work if they are ill or exhibiting any cold/flu-like symptoms, even if the symptoms are very mild. The COVID-19 Screening Questions are available at: [www.gov.mb.ca/asset\\_library/en/coronavirus/covid19\\_screening\\_checklist.pdf](http://www.gov.mb.ca/asset_library/en/coronavirus/covid19_screening_checklist.pdf). Individuals who have possible symptoms/suspected cases of COVID-19 based on the screening must contact Health Links – Info Santé at 204-788-8200 or 1-888-315-9257. Alternatively, individuals in the CLDS program can request Screening and Support Team assistance at [RRT@gov.mb.ca](mailto:RRT@gov.mb.ca) or 1-866-906-0901.

For information on appropriate PPE, see:

- CFS & CLDS: [Circular 2020-160, PPE guidance for residential and group care providers, day services and day service transportation services](#)

- CLDS shift-staffed homes: [Circular 2020-184, PPE requirements for CLDS shift-staffed residential service providers](#) (supplements 2020-160)
- ELCC: [Circular 2020-173r, Child care centre staff in Manitoba required to wear medical-grade masks](#)

For the most up-to-date information on the definition of 'close contacts' and the requirement for self-isolation (quarantine) and household self-isolation (quarantine), see:

<https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/testing/monitoring/close-contacts.html#what-to-do>

For the latest provincial public health information on COVID-19, visit: [www.manitoba.ca/covid19](http://www.manitoba.ca/covid19)

Thank you for your continued efforts to providing a safe environment and reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission.

Attachment:  
Questions & Answers

**Attachment: Questions & Answers for Staff in  
Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC),  
Community Living disABILITY Services (CLDS) Residential Care, and  
Child and Family Services (CFS) Group Care Facilities**

**Q: What does it mean to be a close contact of a COVID-19 case?**

A: A close contact is anyone who has been in close physical proximity (less than two metres or six feet) for more than a cumulative of ten minutes to a confirmed COVID-19 case over the course of a day. It also includes people who provided care for the case or had direct contact with infectious body fluids without the use of personal protective equipment. All household members are considered close contacts. As well, a person would be considered a close contact if they had close face to face interactions with someone who has COVID-19 without the use of required PPE, even if the interactions were less than ten minutes cumulative.

**Q: Can I work if I am awaiting COVID-19 test results?**

A: No. If you are awaiting test results, you are required to isolate and not attend work.

**Q: Can I work if public health informs me that I am a close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case?**

A: No. You must immediately self-isolate (quarantine) and follow public health direction regarding testing and/or self-isolation (quarantine). This applies regardless of where the contact occurred.

**Q: Can I work if someone in my household has symptoms of COVID-19 and is awaiting COVID-19 test results, but not because they are a close contact to a confirmed case?**

A: Yes. Staff in the ELCC, CLDS shift-staffed residential care and CFS group care sectors may continue to work. However, you must self-isolate (quarantine) outside of work hours. In addition, you must not be symptomatic, [self-screen](#) before each shift, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during each shift and self-monitor for symptoms on an ongoing basis.

Those working in the CLDS sector providing day, transportation or respite services must not continue to work if someone in their household has symptoms of COVID-19 and is awaiting COVID-19 test results.

**Q: Can I work if someone in my household has been identified as a close contact of a confirmed case?**

A: Yes. You can work unless the household member is a close contact of a person with a coronavirus variant of concern.

If your household member is a close contact of a COVID case not linked to a variant of concern, you may continue to work as long as the contact is not symptomatic. However, you must self-isolate (quarantine) outside of work hours. In addition, you must not have symptoms, [self-screen](#) before each shift, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during each shift and self-monitor for symptoms on an ongoing basis.

If your household member is a close contact of a COVID case that is linked to a variant of concern, you may not continue to work. You must immediately self-isolate (quarantine) and follow the advice provided by public health. If you have questions, you may contact Health

Links – Info Santé. If you work in the CLDS sector, you may contact the CLDS Screening and Support Team (SAST).

**Q: Why do home-based early learning and child care programs need to close if a household member is identified as a close contact of a COVID case or is awaiting test results, but not if a child or their parent/household member is deemed to be a close contact or is awaiting test results?**

A: Proactive screening should ensure children, parents, volunteers and staff should not be attending the facility if they are sick or exhibiting any possible symptoms of COVID-19. Parents are unlikely to be a close contact to a home-based provider because pick-ups and drop-offs should be scheduled and managed efficiently to minimize the time in the home – under 10 minutes.

**Q: What is a “variant of concern?”**

A: Variants of the COVID-19 virus are expected, and are the result of mutations in the virus. However, there are several new variants identified that have raised concerns because they may be more easily transmitted, may be associated with an increased risk of death compared to other variants (although the overall risk of death is still low), or may result in decreased vaccine effectiveness. These are referred to as “variants of concern”. Cases of COVID-19 due to variants of concern have been recently identified in Manitoba, although the numbers in Manitoba are currently low.

Our knowledge and understanding of these variants is rapidly evolving. Manitoba’s goal is to slow the introduction of variants of concern in Manitoba, giving us more time to immunize our population. As a result, changes have been introduced to how we manage cases and contacts to further reduce the spread of all cases of COVID-19, including additional, more aggressive measures for variants of concern cases. Further information on variants of concern is available at: <https://gov.mb.ca/covid19/fundamentals/variants.html>.

**Q: Can I work if someone in my household tests positive for COVID-19?**

A: No. You must immediately self-isolate (quarantine) and follow the advice provided by public health. If you have questions, you may contact Health Links – Info Santé. If you work in the CLDS sector, you may contact the CLDS Screening and Support Team (SAST).

**Q: When can I continue working after receiving negative COVID-19 test results?**

A: If you receive a negative COVID-19 test result, were exposed (either because you travelled or are a close contact to a confirmed case), and have symptoms, you must continue to self-isolate (quarantine) for the entire 14 day period and until you have been symptom free for 24 hours.

If you receive a negative COVID-19 test result and do have symptoms, but have not travelled or been exposed to a confirmed case, you must continue to isolate until you have been symptom-free for 24 hours.

You may continue working after your self-isolation (quarantine) and/or isolation period is complete.

**Q: When can I continue working after receiving positive COVID-19 test results?**

A: A public health official will inform you when you can stop isolating and continue working.

**Q: Can I work if a staff member, child (ELCC), or care facility resident (CFS/CLDS) becomes a suspected or confirmed COVID-19 case?**

A: Yes. You may continue to work if you have not been identified as a close contact. However, you must not be symptomatic, [self-screen](#) before each shift, wear PPE during each shift and self-monitor for symptoms on an ongoing basis. If you believe you may have been exposed to COVID-19 during your shift (e.g., breach of PPE with a confirmed COVID-19 case) you must immediately self-isolate (quarantine) and contact Health Links – Info Santé for guidance. Those working in the CLDS sector may contact the CLDS Screening and Support Team (SAST). CLDS and CFS providers can refer to the [letter from Dr. Roussin dated October 29, 2020](#) for more information.

**Q: If public health informs me during my shift that I am a close contact to a confirmed COVID-19 case and need to go for testing, can I finish my shift?**

A: No. You must immediately self-isolate (quarantine) and follow public health direction regarding testing and/or self-isolation (quarantine). This applies regardless of where the contact occurred.

**Q: Can I continue to work if a member of my household was sent home from their workplace or school as a precautionary measure related to COVID-19?**

A: There are several situations where you may continue to work.

If the household member develops symptoms of COVID-19 or is awaiting test results, you may continue to work if you are employed in the ELCC, CLDS shift-staffed residential care or CFS group care sectors. However, you must self-isolate (quarantine) outside of work hours. You must also not be symptomatic, [self-screen](#) before each shift, wear personal protective equipment (PPE) during each shift and self-monitor for symptoms on an ongoing basis. If your household member is identified as a close contact of a COVID case and is symptomatic, you must not continue to work until the close contact has tested negative.

Those working in the CLDS sector providing day, transportation or respite services must not continue to work if someone in their household is awaiting COVID-19 test results and develops symptoms.

**Q: How can I contact the Health Links – Info Santé or CLDS Screening and Support Team (SAST)?**

A: Health Links – Info Santé is available 24/7 and can be contacted by phone at 204-788-8200 or (toll free) 1-888-315-9257.

CLDS Screening and Support Team (SAST) assistance is available to CLDS service providers only. It can be requested during regular business hours through the Rapid Response Team (RRT) by email at [RRT@gov.mb.ca](mailto:RRT@gov.mb.ca) or by phone (toll free) at 1-866-906-0901.