



2 September 2009

Dear Parents,

Welcome back from one of the most wonderful, long and sunny summers in recent memory. I hope that you've all enjoyed some time together with your families, whether it be in town for one of the many "staycations" I've been hearing about, or while on an out-of-town getaway.

I'm sure many of you have been following the media coverage about H1N1 and the predictions of an influenza illness increase following the return of children to school. The purpose of this letter is to begin a dialogue with you about what to expect at Parkgate Community Centre in the licensed child care facilities (i.e. Infant/Toddler, 3-5 Group Care/Kindercare and School Age Care programs) in terms of H1N1 or any influenza illness this fall.

One challenge that we find ourselves up against is acknowledging that the environment may suddenly change, and that the safety measures and practices we have put into place may have to be altered or modified. This fall is the first time we have been asked by our local Health Authority to plan for a possible influenza pandemic, and we find ourselves in "unchartered waters". While we are not trying to alarm you, we felt that you needed to know what we have been up to, and what our practices and policies are as they relate to keeping your children and our staff safe during the flu season.

Over the summer months, we have been working with staff from Vancouver Coastal Health to plan for the impact of a virulent flu season or pandemic. This letter is meant to inform you of the initiatives we have taken with our staff, actions we are taking in the child care environments to help reduce the transmission of influenza, information about when to keep your child at home, and when it is okay to let your child return to daycare, and how to plan for unusual circumstances. In the email from which this letter was attached, we have also included the links to three very useful websites and encourage you to spend some time reading through the material which you may find useful in preparing your family for the return-to-school period.

Community Centre Initiatives

Over the summer, we have:

- Implemented BC Centre for Disease Control practices in our summer daycamps and overnight camps aimed at reducing the transmission of the influenza virus in summer camps
- Provided general staff training on identification of influenza-like symptoms. The training facilitated increased self-monitoring and increased identification of flu-like symptoms in others
- Posted Ministry of Health provided signage in key areas (e.g. washrooms, drinking fountains) on identification of influenza-like symptoms and reduction of flu transmission
- Provided information to staff on planning for, managing, and recovering from an influenza virus
- Reviewed Ministry of Health guidelines on reporting above-average absenteeism in child care programs
- Purchased alcohol-based hand rubs, Kleenex and GermAway (a product that can be used to clean hard surfaces such as phones, keyboards, counters) to be used throughout the Community Centre to reduce the transmission of the influenza virus

A partnership between Parkgate Community Services and North Vancouver Recreation Commission

'Providing programs and services through Parkgate Community Centre, Seymour Youth Centre and Seycove Community Centre'

3625 Banff Court, North Vancouver, BC V7H 2Z8 Reception: 604-983-6350 Fax: 604-983-6357 www.myparkgate.com

Actions We Are Taking in the Daycare Environment

We are undertaking the following actions within our child care programs:

- Completing a checklist provided by Vancouver Coastal Health, specifically designed for influenza pandemic response planning for child care facilities. This checklist identifies important, specific actions for us to take in order to get ready for an influenza pandemic.
- Planning to provide more frequent cleaning and disinfecting of toys.
- Increasing the attention of maintenance staff in cleaning “high touch” locations such as door knobs, sink faucets and counters.
- Installing hand sanitizer stations in the child care facilities to be used by parents when they enter the child care rooms, and by staff in addition to their frequent hand washing practices.
- Implementing daily procedures where staff check children as they arrive, to see if they are sick
- Providing our staff with an annual flu shot.

When to Keep Your Child at Home and When to Return After Your Child Has Been Sick

In order to reduce the transmission of the influenza virus, please care for your child at home if they begin to exhibit any of the symptoms listed below. Keep your child away from other people until they are no longer exhibiting any of the influenza virus symptoms listed below, and until they are feeling better and able to fully participate in normal activities.

In most children, the symptoms of the H1N1 flu virus are similar to the symptoms of seasonal influenza and include:

Fever
Cough
Headache
Sore throat
Body aches
Eye pain
Headache
Chills and fatigue
Shortness of breath
Lack of appetite (in younger children)
Occasionally, runny nose, nausea, vomiting and diarrhea

Our *Parkgate Child + Family Centre Family Handbook*, outlines our policy regarding illness. The policy is:

ILLNESS

While we are sensitive to the stress that illness may cause for families, we are not licensed to care for ill children. You will need to keep your child at home, or make alternate arrangements, if your child:

- *has a communicable disease*
- *has a contagious infection, including pink eye*
- *has a fever over 38 degrees Celsius within 24 hours*
- *is vomiting or has diarrhea within 24 hours*
- *has a skin infection or an undiagnosed rash*
- *is not well enough to participate in all program activities including outdoor activities.*



Please notify the Child Care Program if your child has a communicable disease so that other families and the Community Health Department can be notified.

If your child becomes ill during the day, we will attempt to contact you. If you are unavailable, we will try to reach your emergency contact/s. We will provide a quiet rest area and close staff supervision until you, or one of your emergency contacts, can pick up your child. If the situation becomes urgent, we will follow the medical emergency procedures as outlined below.

While every effort will be taken to maintain a healthy environment, it is important for you to plan now for alternate arrangements in the event of your child's illness.

Unusual Circumstances

In the event of unusual circumstances, Parkgate Community Services Society will take direction from our local Medical Health Officer, in consultation with the Provincial Health Officer. We have been informed by our local Medical Health Officer that public health officials in BC do not anticipate that closures will be useful for controlling the transmission and impact of the H1N1 flu virus. However, we are suggesting that families consider establishing networks for alternate care for their children should Parkgate's child care facilities close during an influenza pandemic.

We appreciate your comments and welcome the opportunity to improve our practices by learning from others. If your business or place of work has plans and practices that you think might be useful for us to look at, I would enjoy the opportunity to talk with you. I can be reached at 604-983-6375 or by email at abeckett@myparkgate.com

Most sincerely,

Arleta Beckett

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