



First Nations Health Authority
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Aboriginal Head Start On Reserve Restart Planning Toolkit for Head Start Coordinators

Communities may wish to use the following operational information and resources to assist them as they make plans to restart programs or services that were shut down as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Please use this community-based and community-paced resource in alignment with your own stage of decision-making and/or readiness. And if you have any questions, please reach out to your Regional Head Start Advisor for further support.

Guidelines to consider when restarting programs and services

The following resources are essential reading to help you plan how to safely restart programs and services:

- [COVID-19 Public Health Guidance for Child Care Settings \(Updated May 19, 2020\)](#). This document from the provincial government outlines steps to take to provide a safe environment and keep staff, children and families healthy. This guidance document is informed by BC's Restart Plan, Management Checklist and information on WorkSafeBC and Frequently Asked Questions.
- [FNHA's Services Resumption Planning Guide for BC First Nations](#). This guide builds on the 7 Directives and Shared Values to outline criteria for re-opening, safety considerations, planning for service resumption and resources for First Nations.
- [Information for Providers](#): This provincial government website includes resources on transition planning for child care providers.
- [WorkSafeBC Child Care and Day Camps: Protocols for Return to Operations](#). This information is based on guidance from the BC Centre for Disease Control. Following WorkSafeBC protocols will help you identify what may need to be implemented or modified. This includes developing a safety plan, understanding the risk, selecting protocols for your workplace, protocols for child care, and additional resources.
- [BC Centre for Disease Control: Child care and schools](#). This site includes information for parents and staff and operators about COVID-19.
- Other useful resources include the [BC Centre for Disease Control](#) and the [BC Aboriginal Child Care Society](#).

We encourage you to conduct ongoing discussions with your Health/Education Directors, leadership and Program Managers to stay up to date on the latest information and build confidence for staff and families in knowing that their safety and well-being is the top priority through the reopening transition.



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

Accommodating physical distancing requirements

The physical space of your licensed/unlicensed Head Start program may be able to safely operate at full capacity should your community choose to do so. (The physical space requirements for licensed child care facilities required by the [Child Care Licensing Regulation](#) mean that child care centres already meet the physical distancing recommendations of the Provincial Health Officer.)



We are strongly advising communities to reach out to their local child care licensing officer for advice, recommendations or further support. The child care ratios will remain the same; however, should you need to modify, you will need to request an exemption for approval by the licensing officer. In addition, you can reach out to your Head Start Advisor for further support and/or guidance.

Restart Planning Toolkit Tips

Once you have thoroughly read through the above resources and dialogued with your multi-disciplinary teams, including your community's leadership, there are some other things to consider – including the delivery model that's best for your community and communicating changes to staff and family.

Head Start delivery models

Communities make different choices about how to best use their Head Start funds, taking into account their community size, numbers of children, existing services and capacity, isolation factors and transportation challenges, as well as family and community needs and priorities and the availability of qualified staff. Some communities use Head Start funds to supplement and enhance existing programs and link with other funding sources, while others use funds to create programs where none existed before.



The four most common Head Start delivery models

Outreach/Family Program: This model works well for communities without a facility, where there are not enough children for a centre-based program, or where isolation factors and transportation challenges exist.	For example: Home visiting services and scheduled family activities, outdoor learning with families, parent & tot activities, community kitchen, toy/book lending library, parent workshops, etc.
Daycare & Preschool Enhancement: This model can enhance existing daycares or preschools by targeting gap areas to ensure the six components are included in programming.	For example: Additional ECE or language staff, outdoor learning, parent workshops, culture and language activities, nutritious meals and outreach services.
Combination: This model is very flexible and works well in small communities where the number of children, staff and facilities are limited. The model will enhance and/or offer multiple services for children between the ages of 0 and six years.	For example: Outdoor learning, language nests, before and after school care, parent-tot, outreach services, and parenting programs. These programs can be short term, like summer programs, ongoing or a combination of both.
Stand Alone: Centre-based Head Start programs are licensed programs for children between the ages of 0 and six with qualified staff that meet licensing standards.	For example: Some communities are operating child care for essential workers.

Many communities recently experienced how flexible Head Start is when they shifted from their existing stand-alone preschool delivery model to an outreach model. Staff working from home developed and distributed resource kits to the families in their community. The beauty of Head Start is that it's a flexible program that can be adapted to meet your community's unique needs.

You will want to consider the following:

- Decide how you want to deliver your Head Start program. Will you be continuing with the previous model or implement a different one, such as outreach only? Will there be transitions of job duties/responsibilities, days/hours of work, breaks/lunch, etc.?
- Think about the daily schedule. Anticipate how you might need to modify the schedule based on the new safety protocols and to ensure you are following the required guidelines. You may need to consider transitions and physical distancing. meal and napping times, circle time and outdoor time, and more.
- Look at your licensed programming and possible modification to your child-to-staff ratios — consider what your plan will be to support all involved. Work with your local licensing officer to seek further options and possible recommendations.
- Identify how to inform the community of your restart plan to ensure safety for all.

Head Start operations and staffing



First Nations Health Authority
Health through wellness

You will need to develop a plan for communicating clearly and on an ongoing basis with staff about the “new normal.” These items could be covered as part of the staff’s re-orientation/return to new policies or procedures. Taking these necessary steps supports the transfer of knowledge and information, models best practices, and ensures that families and communities are receiving accurate information they need about the restart when they talk with staff.

- Hold ongoing discussions with your Head Start staff to inform them about the process of restarting and update them on any new health policies for the Band and/or specific to the Head Start program. Factor in enough time to learn from and inform each other while identifying the above transitions/protocols.
- Consider how you will ensure staff are kept up to date on new developments, including equipping them with knowledge to implement any necessary changes.
- Let staff know about the new restart protocols and procedures. Consider how you will support them in understanding the “how” and the “why,” along with the ability to support best practices: the “what.”
- If staff were laid off, staff could be recalled and start work before the Head Start program resumes for families. Using this time to support staff as they adapt to the new best practices – and giving them opportunities to share their emotional states – will be beneficial in restoring staff’s confidence.
- Create a strategy for how you will support individuals within the team. Each individual may be experiencing various levels of emotion and may require additional supports. For example, some communities may have a health benefits plan while others may stay connected with external resources.
- Identify what needs to be communicated before the return date, including what staff can expect, what steps must be followed, and how the new restart protocols and policies will support a safe return to program(s).
- Consider the value and importance of additional training for your staff. Your Head Start Regional Advisor can support you and your community through the restart process and moving forward in a variety of ways, including closed Facebook groups, online town hall meetings or videos on how your program will look different so families/community know what to expect.
- Monitor and evaluate your plans and adapt as needed.



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Health through wellness

Head Start families and your community

Families may have lots of questions about reopening of programs and services and how you are working to ensure the safety of their children and community.

- Identify what needs to be communicated with families before your reopening date and how you will share this information with them. They will want to know hours of operation, what to expect, what steps must be followed around drop-off and pick-up times, and how your new protocols and policies will support a safe return to program(s).
- Support families/community in knowing they are not alone, that we are in this together and how your program will support them
- Post and share resources on topics such as physical distancing, hand washing and hygiene; how to clean and disinfect; and information on staying at home when you are not well, etc.
- Consider how to continue or further use the Head Start Outreach Delivery Model to connect with those who may not be able to access the program/facility, and link families to available resources and/or resource kits.



FNHA Regional Head Start Advisors are available to support communities throughout the Restart planning.