THE PRE-SCHOOL AND DAY-CARE CENTRE COUNCIL
OF
THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

GUIDELINES
ON THE REOPENING OF REGISTERED PRE-SCHOOLS
AND
DAY-CARE CENTRES
IN THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE BAHAMAS

13TH JULY, 2020
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Due to the Pandemic of Covid-19, the Pre-school and Day-Care Centre Council on the approval of the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education; and based on the advice of the Centre for Disease Control (CDC), presented new Guidelines to the Minister of Education pertaining to the Reopening of Pre-schools and Day-Care Centres in The Bahamas. These recommendations were approved by the Minister of Education and will be inserted in the existing National Standards Guidelines entitled “A Guide to the Early Childhood Care National Standards”.

These New Guidelines include that of Environmental Health, Public Health and the Pre-school and Day-Care Centre Council.

These new Guidelines must be adhered to by all directors/operators of pre-schools and day-care centres effective July 13th, 2020.

NB: All directors/operators of pre-schools and day-care centres must be in compliance with the Early Childhood Care Act, 2004 and the Early Childhood Care (National Standards) Regulations 2015.
The re-opening of Daycare Centres and Preschools will be guided by the COVID-19 Emergency Powers Orders. Education facilities are scheduled to open during phase 3 of the government’s plan for the re-opening of the economy. It is anticipated that this will apply to the re-opening of preschools. As we are now entering the summer period when most pre-schools are traditionally closed, it is likely that this re-opening will coincide with the normal period of opening for schools in late August or early September.

It must be noted however that some Daycare Centres remain open during the summer to facilitate the need for early childcare for working parents. As the economy begins to reopen and more parents return to work, recommendations/guidance for the opening of daycare centres prior to September/phase 3 must therefore also be considered.

AGE APPROPRIATE PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

It is not appropriate for young children to maintain the models of physical distancing that would be suitable for older children, either practically or in terms of child development. In particular, it is not desirable or possible to implement strict physical distancing between young children or between a young child and their key worker. Additionally, face masks/coverings should not be placed on children under the age of 2 (or anyone unable to remove the face covering without assistance). Alternative, age appropriate public health measures will therefore need to be put in place for early childcare and education settings. These measures include:

- Enhanced hand hygiene and cleaning practices.
- Caring for children in small groups.
- Minimizing contact between those groups.
- Maximizing use of outdoor spaces.
- Physical distancing between adults in the setting, including parent to parent interaction at drop-off and pick-up times.

Public Health measures for the re-opening of Daycare Centres and Preschools aim to:

1. Minimize the risk of the introduction of COVID-19 to early childcare facilities.
2. Prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases among staff, children and their families.
3. Maximize the ability of children and families to access safe, high quality early child care and education.
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| Minimize risk of the introduction of SARS-CoV-2 in early childcare facilities. | Develop, share and enforce strict policy regarding sick staff and children. | • Have a written policy which requires sick children and staff or persons who have recently had close contact with someone with COVID-19 to stay home.  
• Communicate policy to staff and parents  
• Prominently display signs stating NO SICK CHILDREN ACCEPTED.  
• Encourage parents to have emergency plans for the care of sick children.  
• Ensure that all children or staff who develop symptoms while at the facility is immediately isolated and sent home as soon as possible. |
| Develop and implement screening policies and procedures for entry into facility. |                             | • Develop screening tool/questionnaire to help in the identification of sick staff and children prior to entering facility (does the child or staff have a fever, cold, cough or shortness of breath?).  
• Make a visual assessment of child for signs of illness. Taking of temperature optional (however infrared no contact thermometers advised when used).  
• Prohibit entry of visitors including parents.  
• No special events such as birthday parties that involve participation of parents and others.  
• Place hand washing facilities/hand sanitizers at entrance and require use by staff and preschoolers. |
| Prevent spread of communicable diseases including COVID-19 within facility. | Rapid isolation and removal of sick children/staff | • Identify an isolation room or area that can be used to isolate a sick child.  
• Children and staff who become sick are to be sent home as soon as possible. |
|                                                                          | Frequent cleaning and disinfection of surfaces                          | • Cleaning and disinfection to be carried out with appropriate agents as recommended by the Department of Environmental Health.  
• Develop and implement a cleaning and disinfection schedule for |
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|            |          | frequently touched surfaces.  
|            |          | • Clean, sanitize, and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (for example, playground equipment, door handles) multiple times per day.  
|            |          | • Clean and disinfect shared objects between use (example changing tables).  
|            |          | • Avoid use of items (for example, soft or plush toys) that are not easily cleaned, sanitized, or disinfected.  
|            |          | • Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep products away from children.  
|            |          | • Ensure that ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, and other methods. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk.  
|            |          | • Take steps to ensure that all water systems are safe after a prolonged facility shutdown to minimize the risk of Legionnaires’ disease and other diseases associated with water.  |
| Intensify Healthy hygiene practices |          | • Teach and reinforce washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes among children and staff.  
|            |          | • Teach and reinforce use of cloth face coverings among all staff and children over the age of 2 years. Face coverings are most essential at times when social distancing is not possible. Face masks should not be worn by children during active play.  
|            |          | • Staff and children should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently. Information should be provided to all staff on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.  
|            |          | • Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), and tissues.  
<p>|            |          | • Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19, properly wash hands, promote everyday protective measures, and properly wear a face mask. |</p>
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<tbody>
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<td></td>
<td>Implement modified social distancing practices</td>
<td>• Reduce number of children per classroom to avoid crowding (30 square feet per child).</td>
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<td>• Space out seating and bedding (head-to-toe positioning) to six feet apart.</td>
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<td>• Ensure that classes include the same group of children each day and that the same child care providers remain with the same group each day.</td>
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<td>• Prohibit mixing between groups</td>
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<td>• Increase outdoor learning activities (with same small groups)</td>
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<td>• Prohibit nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving other groups at the same time.</td>
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<td>• Stagger use of communal spaces and disinfect between uses or restrict activities including meals to classrooms.</td>
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<td>• Stagger arrival and drop-off times or put in place other protocols to limit direct contact with parents and between parents as much as possible.</td>
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<td>Ensure safe access to early child care and education</td>
<td>Daycare and Preschool Council to provide guidance and monitoring of Safety Measures</td>
<td>• Review and update early childcare standards manual to reflect the recommendations for the ‘new normal’ operating standards.</td>
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<td>• Provide guidance and educational materials for Daycare and Preschool operators.</td>
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<td>• Inspection of all facilities prior to re-opening and spot checks periodically to ensure that recommended standards are maintained.</td>
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Prepared by:
Gina Dean, Acting Director of Nursing
Ministry of Health

References:

2. CDC Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open Supplemental Guidance, Updated April 21, 2020

3. CDC Interval Guidance, Corona Virus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), considerations for schools. Updated May 19, 2020

DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES (DEHS)

REOPENING

GUIDANCE DOCUMENT FOR PRESCHOOLS

Submitted by Mr. Anthony Ryan, Public Analyst II

Approved by: Ms. Melony Mckenzie, Director, DEHS
PRESCHOOL

REOPENING GUIDANCE DOCUMENT
Prior to the Reopening of Preschools

General

- Preschools closed for 7 days or more require normal routine cleaning and disinfecting as the virus that causes COVID-19 has not been shown to survive on surfaces longer than this time.
- Maintenance & custodial staff members must seek refresher training at DEHS or other approved credible training options.
- Maintenance staff must carry out checks of the preschool facility(s) as part of a preventative maintenance program.
- Custodial staff must thoroughly clean and disinfect all surfaces, items and frequently shared objects prior to the reopening of all preschools.
- PPE, in particular gloves and masks, must be worn by custodial staff when cleaning and disinfecting.
- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
  - Putting on and removal of PPE must be done correctly.
  - Proper disposal methods must be adhered to at all times.
  - Washing of hands at various points must be adhered to (see cleaning and disinfecting section for more details).
- Preschool management must have adequate number of personal protective equipment (PPE) and must ensure the availability of cleaning supplies and disinfecting products which are inclusive of but not limited to:
  - EPA certified disinfectants
  - Microfiber clothes
  - Spray bottles and/or commercial sprayers
- Preschools are required to have an established Health & Safety Committee as outlined in the provisions of the Health & Safety Act Work Act 2002.
- The Committee is required to have regular meeting to discuss new strategies and to ensure the implementation of existing ones.
- Parents, teachers and preschool staff members must be notified as to the establishment and implementation of new guidelines adopted by that Preschool amidst the COVID-19 Pandemic.
Maintenance staff must check the following prior to reopening as part of a preventative maintenance program:

- Maintenance staff must have a checklist form(s) which must be varied by a health and safety committee.
- Checklist form(s) must contain items as outlined in the preventative maintenance plan.
- Ensure proper cross ventilation that is the opening of windows.
- Inspect air-conditioning systems for possible mold growth, dirt & dust accumulation.
- Ensure a fresh air intake to air conditioning systems.

- Where there is a split air conditioning system ensure adequate air movement and the introduction of fresh air into the supplied space.
- Check water systems (e.g., water usage patterns during closure, water heater temperature, chlorination schedules etc.) to mitigate against the possible growth of Legionella Bacteria.
Custodial staff must:

- Custodial staff must have a checklist form(s) which can be verified by a health and safety committee.
- The checklist form(s) must contain all spaces, surfaces, items, objects to be cleaned and disinfected and the frequency thereof.

Custodial staff have the mammoth task of:

- Preventing the spread of the disease causing microorganism through understanding how to clean & disinfect contaminated & non-contaminated environments that is using the best practices & proven strategies available.
- Helping to stop and/or reduce the spread of the disease causing microorganism through effective cleaning & disinfecting methodologies.
- Not contributing to spread disease causing microorganism through poor cleaning and disinfecting practices (e.g., improper use of PPEs, poor cleaning & disinfecting practices, not using recommended disinfectants (70% alcohol content) etc.)

“I always know the preschoolers class had an exciting morning in here when you ask for a mop.”
Prior to the reopening of preschools, teachers, administrators and staff (inclusive of cleaning and maintenance staff) must be briefed on:

- The COVID-19 pandemic notably environmental spread of the Coronavirus (SARS-COV-2) that causes COVID-19
- Established COVID-19 health safety protocols that the preschool have decided to implement

On the first return date teachers should be task with creatively informing preschoolers of the following:

- Briefed about the pandemic
- Told about the established health safety protocols
- The importance of following such protocols

Preschoolers must be reminded daily about the protocols such as hand washing.

An overview of personal hygiene practices:

- Sick individuals must be encouraged to seek medical advice and remain at home
- The importance of wearing face masks
- Covering cough and sneezes
- No sharing of materials
- Washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water and the use of hand sanitizers with a 60% alcohol content if soap and water is not available
- Washing hands after coughing and sneezing
- Disposing of napkins after blowing their nose and washing hands (20 seconds) following
- Cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched surfaces and items as often as possible daily and the cleaning and disinfecting of commonly touched items after each use
The more we insist on traditional practices, the greater the risk for contracting, transmitting and spreading of the Coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) that causes COVID-19 & other disease causing microorganisms.

According to the CDC the more a student or staff member interacts, the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of Coronavirus spread. The risk of the spread increases in school settings as follows:

- **Lowest Risk:** Students and teachers engage in virtual-only classes, activities, and events.
- **More Risk:** Small, in-person classes, activities, and events. Groups of students stay together and with the same teacher throughout/across school days and groups do not mix. Students remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects (e.g., hybrid virtual and in-person class structures, or staggered/rotated scheduling to accommodate smaller class sizes).
- **Highest Risk:** Full sized, in-person classes, activities, and events. Students are not spaced apart, share classroom materials or supplies, and mix between classes and activities.

Routine cleaning and disinfecting are an important part of reducing the risk of exposure to COVID-19.
An area must be designated to house sick preschoolers should the need arise.

This area must be cleaned and disinfected daily.

Ensure that the space is adequately ventilated.
FOLLOWING THE REOPENING OF PRESCHOOLS
REQUIRED PROTOCOLS
ENTRY INTO PRE-SCHOOLS

- Controlled access points to the Preschool
  - Where possible controlled access points must be limited as this ensures compliance with entry protocols

- Enact measures to:
  - Limit the number of persons entering preschools
  - Avoid congestion at entrance points example stagger drop off times

- Visible signs of being sick
  - Any individual(s) showing such signs upon arrival at a preschool should be denied participation and must be required to present medical clearance prior to entry
  - Sick individuals must remain at home

- Temperature checks (optional):
  - Using an infrared thermometer
  - (Note that normal body temperature usually 98.6 degrees Fahrenheit & CDC considers 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit a fever)

- Wearing of face masks:
  - Face mask covering both nose and mouth as required by law (Emergency Powers Act of the Bahamas) must be worn at all times
  - Note that face masks are not recommended for the following persons:
    - children under 2 years of age
    - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious
    - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance
  - Consider the use of face shield for preschoolers (optional)

- Hand hygiene:
  - Using hand washing station with soap and water
  - Alternatively using a hand sanitizer with a 60% alcohol content
Where appropriate, the main office space(s) where parents and other guests traverse must be outfitted with Plexiglas limiting the interaction between receptionist and others.

The main office area must be cleaned and disinfected as often as possible daily.
THROUGHOUT THE PRESCHOOL

- Erecting signs in highly visible places indicating:
  - Handwashing
  - Hand sanitizing
  - For adults (social distancing)
  - Staying home if you are sick
  - Covering cough & sneezes
  - Wearing masks
  - Continuous cleaning of frequently touched surfaces
  - Not touching your face

- Where appropriate install hand washing stations
- Preschoolers must be taught to wash their hands regularly
- Place hand sanitizers with a 60% alcohol content throughout the preschool

HOW TO PREVENT

1. Avoid Touching
   Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unclean hands.

2. Avoid Close Contact
   Do not open your mouth and cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when coughing or sneezing.

3. Clean Your Hands
   Wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.

4. Cover Coughs
   Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

5. Clean and Disinfect
   Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces

COVID-19
Coronavirus Disease 2019
www.belarusbyapps.com

Washing your hands

1. Wet hands under warm running water.
2. Add soap to aid cleaning and to kill germs.
3. Rub for at least 15 seconds.
4. Rinse well under warm running water.
5. Dry hands with clean paper towels.

COVER YOUR COUGH AND SNEEZE

Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.

Clean your hands after coughing or sneezing.
**CLASSROOM SETTINGS**

- Where possible classes should be held outside as the risk for contracting COVID-19 is 20 times less than inside.
- Teachers shall be required to move between classrooms rather than preschoolers.
- Avoid overcrowding of classrooms.
- Social distancing is almost impossible for preschoolers so it is hereby recommended that:
  - When laying down there is a head to foot arrangement.
  - Position preschoolers in a manner that allows for some distancing or adequate spacing (use judgement).
  - Limit (not eliminate) the number of group work.
  - Limit the mixing of classes.
- Teachers shall:
  - Limit close contact with preschoolers as much as possible.
  - Wear mask when interacting with preschoolers.
  - Be required to have additional face masks available daily as prolonged use of masks can be uncomfortable.
  - Have daily access to hand sanitizers, a spray bottle, disinfectants and microfiber cleaning cloth.

- Classrooms must be outfitted with the following:
  - Hand sanitizers with a 60% alcohol content
  - Spray bottle
  - EPA certified disinfectant
  - Microfiber cleaning cloth.
- A custodial staff member must be assigned to various classrooms or lecturing stations.
- Their must be proper coordination between teacher and custodial staff in so far as the cleaning and disinfection are concerned.
- Maintenance staff must ensure proper cross ventilation in non-air-conditioning classrooms (opening of windows) and air conditioning classrooms (ensure fresh air intake).
- Classrooms must be cleaned and disinfected at a minimum of twice per day daily or as often as possible that is at the beginning of the school day, during breaks and at the close of school day.
**STAFF ROOMS**

- **For teachers:**
  - Wear masks at all times covering nose and mouth when interacting with colleagues.
  - Practice social distancing (6 feet apart).
  - Close contacts must be discouraged among teachers by setting up staff rooms in a manner that encourages social distancing.
  - If possible, stagger staff room breaks.

- **Staffrooms must be outfitted with the following:**
  - Hand sanitizers with a 60% alcohol content.
  - Spray bottle.
  - EPA certified disinfectant.
  - Microfiber cleaning cloth.

- **Staffrooms must be cleaned and disinfected at a minimum twice per day daily or as often as possible.**

- **There must be regular checks of the ventilation system(s) by maintenance staff.**
Discourage group gatherings on playgrounds
Map out of playgrounds indicating the number of preschoolers in those areas at any one time
Stagger breaks where possible to discourage large amount of preschoolers out on break at the same time

Clean and disinfect playground surfaces, items and frequently touched objects daily before and after use.
DISINFECTING THE AIR
CORONAVIRUS IN THE AIR

- The Coronavirus can become suspended in air
- Reducing the time and amount of virus in the air:
  - Ensure proper ventilation
  - Proper use of masks
  - Cover cough & sneezes
- Disinfecting the air:
  - Use EPA approved disinfectant sprays to combat coronavirus in the air
  - The use of such sprays should be based on manufacturer's recommendations
CLEANING & DISINFECTING SURFACES
WHAT TO CLEAN & DISINFECT & HOW OFTEN

Create a checklist form that indicates what to clean

- What to clean?
  - Identify all common/public spaces & frequently touched surfaces (this includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, railings, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks)
  - It is vital that waste bins are emptied and disinfected as often as possible and must be outfitted with disposable plastic bags
  - All surfaces must be cleaned during deep cleaning exercises

- How often?
  - Clean frequently touch surfaces and items daily and as often as possible. Shared objects cleaned after each use
  - Classrooms must be cleaned & disinfected before the start, at break time & at the end of school
  - There must be a deep cleaning and disinfection exercise at a minimum quarterly or as often as possible
Follow checklist form(s)
- Pay attention to frequently touched surfaces, items and shared objects listed on the form(s)

Before cleaning:
- Wash Hands for 20 seconds using soap & water or hand sanitizer with 60% alcohol content
- Dress in the appropriate PPE (primarily gloves & Mask)

Pre-Cleaning of dirty surfaces before disinfecting
- If surfaces are dirty, clean them: Use detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection
- Discard of dirty microfiber cloth (see microfiber cloth section)

Clean & disinfect
- Apply disinfectants to frequently touched surfaces. (this includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks) & shared objects
- Allow the disinfectant to remain on surface(s) for the contact time recommended by the manufacturer.
- Wipe down surfaces using microfiber cleaning cloth
- Cloth intended for reuse must be bagged, cleaned and disinfected appropriately (see microfiber cloth section)

Disinfection
- Most common Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered household disinfectants will work. Use disinfectants appropriate for the surfaces (see disinfectant section).
- Allow to air dry

Clean floors
- Clean floors using clean water and appropriate disinfectant
- Disinfect mop heads and allow to dry

Waste
- Dispose of plastic bags in waste bins containing accumulated waste and ensure the use of gloves
- Place clean plastic bags in waste bins
- Wash hands for 20 seconds using soap and water

PPE removal after cleaning
- Remove gloves
- Place gloves in a plastic bag and discard immediately
- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water
- Remove mask
- If cloth, wash and reuse. Otherwise, place in a plastic bag and discard immediately
- Wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water

End with Check list which should be verified by a health & safety committee
Outdoor area(s) generally require normal routine cleaning.

Spraying disinfectant on outside surfaces has not been proven to reduce the risk of COVID-19 to the public. Maintain existing cleaning and hygiene practices for these outdoor areas.

The targeted use of disinfectants can be done effectively, efficiently and safely on outdoor hard surfaces and objects frequently touched by multiple people.
CLEANING & DISINFECTING INDOORS
WHERE THERE IS A CASE OR SUSPECTED CASE

- The area(s) must be closed immediately
- Consult with the competent authorities Ministry of Health, Public Health Department and Department of Environmental Health (DEHS) if necessary
- Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible.
- Proper PPE must be worn during cleaning and disinfection
- The entire space(s) inclusive of all frequently touched surfaces, items and shared objects must be thoroughly cleaned and disinfected
- Use products that meet EPA disinfection criteria and that are appropriate for the targeted surface(s). Allow the disinfectant to remain on surface(s) for the contact time recommended by the manufacturer.
- All frequently touched surfaces, items and shared objects must be wipe down thoroughly following recommended contact time for disinfection

Bag and launder items (e.g., towels etc.) as appropriate

Waste
- Dispose of plastic bags in waste bins containing accumulated waste and ensure the use of gloves
- Place clean plastic bags in waste bins
- Wash hands for 20 seconds using soap and water

Outdoor area(s) generally require normal routine cleaning and do not require special disinfection. Existing cleaning and hygiene practices for outdoor areas should be continued and maintained
DISINFECTANTS & CLEANING CLOTH

COVID-19 lists of disinfectant active substances and products

> European Chemicals Agency
**Type of Disinfectants**

**Disinfectant**
- Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteria](#) and that are appropriate for the targeted surface(s). Allow the disinfectant to remain on surface(s) for the contact time recommended by the manufacturer.

**Disinfection type**
- Soap & water
  - Mechanically removes the virus from your skin
- Alcohol based sanitizers (60% alcohol content)
  - Can be used on hands or surfaces
- Bleach Solution:
  - Diluting your household bleach To make a bleach solution, mix:
    - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water OR
    - 4 teaspoons of bleach per quart of water
- Hydrogen peroxide
- Quaternary Ammonium Compound Ammonium Compounds (QUATs)
- Lysol
- Other Hospital Grade disinfectants

**Ensure the following:**
- Disinfectants are not expired
- For all disinfectant use follow manufacture’s recommendations

**Safe and correct use**
- Ensuring [safe and correct use](#) of disinfectants and store securely away from children.
- Disinfectants works best when you follow manufacture’s instructions as outlined on the label

**DO NOT MIX CHEMICALS**
- Do not mix disinfectants example bleach and ammonia

**Dispense disinfectants**
- Using spray bottles and/or commercial sprayers
**Type of Cleaning Cloth**

- Microfiber cleaning cloth must be used for cleaning.
- When a cleaning cloth becomes very dirty, place in a plastic bag and discard immediately.
- Wash hands for 20 seconds after discarding.
- Microfiber cleaning cloth intended for reuse must be placed in labeled plastic bag, washed in warm water using appropriate disinfectant and thoroughly dried.
BUSES

- Frequently touched surfaces and items on school buses transporting preschoolers must be cleaned and disinfected at a minimum twice daily and as often as possible.
- Microfiber cloth must be used for cleaning.
- Commercial sprayers are recommended for the dispensing of EPA certified disinfectants.
PRODUCED BY THE PRE-SCHOOL AND DAY-CARE CENTRE COUNCIL
INCLUSIVE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES
AND THE DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH
13th JULY, 2020