

Overnight Camps and Outdoor Education Centres

Frequently Asked Questions for Reopening in Step 2

Recreational camps as defined in O. Reg. 503/17: Recreational Camps under the Health Protection and Promotion Act (HPPA) (hereby referred to a “recreational camps”) must comply with [O. Reg. 503/17](#) and any other directives or guidance published by the Ministry of Health. In the event of any conflict between this document and any applicable legislation, emergency order, or directives issued by the Minister of Health or the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH), the legislation, order, or directive prevails.

General

Why isn't the document called “COVID-19 Guidance: Recreational Camps” to align with O. Reg. 503/17?

To minimize confusion between day camps and overnight camps, we have aligned the language with the language in the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#) (ROA) – camps that provide supervised overnight accommodation for children. Overnight camps that meet the definition of “recreational camps” in O. Reg. 503/17 are to comply with that Regulation and operate in a manner that is consistent with the safety guidelines for COVID-19 for overnight camps produced by the Office of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (OCMOH) pursuant to subsection 21(2) of Schedule 2 of [O. Reg. 263/20 \(Rules for Areas in Step 2\)](#) under the ROA.

Do camps need to adhere to the Food Premises Regulation and the Small Drinking Water requirements?

As per s. 19 of O. Reg. 503/17, every operator of a camp must ensure that any food premises in the recreational camp complies with Parts III, IV, and VI of the [Food Premises Regulation](#) (Ontario Regulation 493/17 – Food Premises under the HPPA).

Section 15 of O. Reg. 503/17 outlines the requirements for the recreational camps’ water supply. Most recreational camps that use water from a private drinking water systems are considered “designated facilities” and are regulated by the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks and are required to adhere to [Ontario Regulation 170/03 – Drinking Water Systems](#) under the [Safe Drinking Water Act, 2002](#).

Are camps where campers participate in activities that involve singing and/or the playing of brass or wind instruments allowed?

All activities that involve singing or the playing of brass or wind instruments must be outside. The campers participating in the activity must be part of the same cohort or established cohort and must maintain a physical distance of at least 2 metres from other cohorts or unestablished cohorts participating in similar activities.

Will there be tools or inspection documents to support the operation of overnight camps?

Yes, Public Health Ontario developed a [checklist](#) for overnight camps that is in alignment with the overnight camps guidance, as well as [training webinars](#) that will be made available for camps and staff. The Ministry of Labour, Training, and Skills Development also hosted a [webinar](#) for overnight camps.

Will the camp safety plan (as per s. 10 of O.Reg. 503/17) and the COVID-19 Safety Plan need to be approved by the local public health unit?

As per section 10 of O. Reg. 503/17 under the HPPA, recreational camps are required to submit a safety plan to the local medical officer of health or public health inspector prior to opening or operating the camp. Additionally, as part of the camp safety plan, camps must include a plan for communicable disease control (s.10(3)).

Under the [Reopening Ontario \(A Flexible Response to COVID-19\) Act, 2020](#) (ROA) regulations, persons responsible for a business that is open are required to prepare and make available a COVID-19 safety plan.

As such, camps may choose to include the COVID-19 safety plan as part of the submission of the camp safety plan (as per O. Reg. 503/17). Camps are only required to submit the camp safety plan (as per O. Reg. 503/17) to the local medical officer of health or public health inspector prior to opening or opening the camp; the COVID-19 safety plan is not required to be submitted to the local medical officer of health or public health inspector, but must be made available to any person for review upon request. For details on the COVID-19 Safety Plan, please see s.3.3 of Schedule 1 of [O. Reg. 263/20 \(Rules for Areas in Step 2\)](#).

Are camps required to have a pre-opening inspection?

As per the [Health Hazard Response Protocol, 2019 \(or as current\)](#), boards of health are required to conduct a minimum of one inspection per year for all recreational camps (as defined in O. Reg. 503/17 under the HPPA). This requirement does not specify when the inspection must take place (i.e. is not a requirement that it has to be prior to opening).

Why is there no recommendation that bathrooms should be cleaned between each cohort use?

It is recommended that bathrooms be cleaned routinely and/or at a minimum of twice daily. Camps should stagger the use of washrooms, change rooms, showers, and laundry facilities by cohorts. This aligns with other guidance and recommendations in other sectors (e.g., congregate living facilities).

Can bunkbeds be used?

Yes, bunkbeds can be used within a cohort.

In the event of exposure, there will be high-risk contacts. Can high risk contacts continue camp activities in their own cohort (i.e., in isolation as a group)?

Camps are to follow directions of the local public health unit regarding the management of symptomatic campers, staff, and any other close contacts.

High-risk contacts should be tested for COVID-19 and should be separated and isolated in a designated space that is separate from the health centre/first aid facility until they can be transported home/to an off-site location for their self-isolation or other next steps as may be determined in consultation with the local public health unit.

Cohorting

Is there a limit on cohort size?

Cohort limits are not defined in the overnight camp guidance. Cohorts should be organized and sized in a manner that ensures staff/camper ratios as described in O. Reg. 503/17, and where applicable, the [Child Care and Early Years Act, 2014](#). It is recommended that cohort limits should be reflective of the size of the cabin or sleeping arrangements.

The number of campers and staff within each cohort can vary to facilitate common grouping arrangements (e.g., according to age groups, leadership training programmes, campers with special needs, length of stay.).

How will cohorting and physical distancing work at an overnight camp?

Campers and staff who are assigned to a cohort (i.e., those who have frequent and/or close interactions and/or those who function similarly to a household (e.g., share sleeping arrangements)) will not need to physically distance from one another within the cohort. Physical distancing should be practiced between:

- Any visitors
- Other cohorts both indoors and outdoors

Cohorts are permitted to mix and not physically distance outdoors once they become established (i.e., have been a cohort for at least 14 days without any new individuals added during the 14-day period at the camp).

For greater clarity:

Cohort A and cohort B arrive on the same day. Cohort A does not need to physically distance among themselves. Cohort B does not need to physically distance among themselves. Cohort A and cohort B must physically distance when outdoors (e.g., during activities such as swimming) and must mask and physically distance when indoors. On day 15 at the camp, both cohort A and cohort B are considered established cohorts and are no longer required to physically distance from one another outdoors, provided there have been no COVID-19 illnesses in either of the two cohorts. New campers who arrive on day 15 form cohort C and must physically distance from cohort A and cohort B for 14 days.

If staff are not residing with their camper cohort (i.e., they are not sleeping in the same cabin and are sleeping, eating, etc. with other staff) do they have to adhere to public health measures (e.g., masking) while they are in their staff-only spaces? How will this work for sleeping?

A cohort functions similarly to a household and those who share sleeping quarters. In this case, if staff are not residing with their camper cohort, they are to adhere to public health measures (e.g., masking, physical distancing) while with their campers.

Do cohorts have to wear masks?

Cohorts are not required to wear a mask when they are with individuals within their cohort (including established cohorts). Where physical distancing cannot be maintained from individuals who are outside of their cohort, a mask must be worn, with some exceptions (e.g., for medical conditions).

If an individual (camper or staff) leaves the camp for a short period of time (e.g., COVID-19 vaccination appointment), are they permitted to rejoin their original cohort? Do they have to adhere to any public health measures once they return to camp?

Individuals that leave the camp for a short period of time, and adhere to public health measures (e.g., masking, hand washing, physical distancing) while outside of the camp, may re-enter the

camp and join their cohort. The ministry has made point-of-care antigen testing available for use in instances where campers and staff return to camp after a short period of time outside of the camp.

Testing

Is testing mandatory? Are campers and staff required to be tested prior to camp? Are they required to show proof of a negative test?

The ministry has not made testing a mandatory requirement for staff and campers attending an overnight camp; however, camps may choose to do so. The ministry has made pre-departure asymptomatic PCR testing available through pharmacies for the 2021 camp season (June-August) for both campers and staff of overnight camps who wish to be tested prior to arrival at camp. The ministry has also made rapid antigen tests available for both overnight and day camps to use as part of their broader public health measures. Camps can apply for rapid antigen tests through the [Ontario Together website](#). The overnight camp guidance references that rapid antigen screening is available as an additional measure during the first 14 days while cohorts are being established and as a screening tool for any staff or camper who is returning to camp from an expedition, off-site excursion, or short period of time outside of the camp (e.g., for a vaccination or medical appointment).

What is the minimum age for point-of-care antigen tests?

There is no minimum age limit for the use of rapid antigen tests. Please refer to the ministry [website](#) on point-of-care (“rapid”) antigen tests for more information.

Outbreaks

What are the criteria to close a camp?

The decision to close a camp due to an outbreak of COVID-19 should be considered if campers and/or staff in two or more cohorts test positive for COVID-19 and could have reasonably acquired their infection in the camp within a 14-day period or at the advice of the local medical officer of health.