

OMFS Memorandum of Understanding

Covid-19 presents a risk in our community and while there is a lower-risk presented within an outdoor setting, it is important that we all take extra measures to ensure that we prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. This means that we all have added responsibilities while a pandemic has been declared. Children/Staff/Volunteers who have, or live with someone who has, an immune-compromising condition or other medical complexity should discuss the safety of attending forest school/camp with their health care provider.

The policies outlined in this document are meant to provide a safe environment for participants, their families, and staff/volunteers while staying as true to our values and quality of programming at OMFS as possible. This is a challenging line to walk, especially when we want the children to feel these safety measures as little as possible, so we will endeavour to work these policies and procedures seamlessly into our daily rhythms.

This Memorandum of Understanding must be signed by all families, staff and volunteers before participating in our programs. **Please read it in its entirety.**

Please note: This is a living document that will be updated as the COVID-19 situation changes.

The most up-to-date version of this document can be found on the Parent Portal:

www.romedonteforestschool.ca/current-families

Last updated June 2021

OMFS COVID-19 Specific Policies

The following policies are temporary in nature and are designed to keep children, staff and volunteers safe during this current pandemic. Some of these policies will take the place of others contained in the OMFS Parent Handbook. Please ensure that this content is read carefully.

1. Health & Safety Policies Related to COVID-19

OMFS staff and families will work together to ensure that the policies listed below are followed. It is our collective duty to create a community of trust, and to mitigate risk where possible.

1.1 Screening For COVID-19

- Families/Staff/Volunteers will be required to take their/ their child's temperature each morning prior to forest school/camp.
- Families/Staff/Volunteers will be asked to complete an online Covid Screening each day, prior to arrival.
- All families will be greeted by an OMFS staff to ensure the completion of the online screening and to record your child's morning temperature. If the online screening was not completed this must be done on site, prior to accessing the OMFS program.
- The answers to your screening will be recorded and kept on file, along with your child's temperature which you will have taken at home.
- Any staff, volunteer, or child who does not pass the screening will not be able to attend forest school/camp until symptoms are cleared and a negative test result is received, or until SMDHU provides clearance.
- No child, parent, volunteer or staff will be permitted to visit the Cedar Grove or the inside of the chalet during program hours until this screening has been completed.

1.2 Mask Use

- All children, staff, and volunteers are required to wear masks when inside (unless eating) or when adequate physical distancing is not possible.
- Children, staff and volunteers may be required to wear a mask outside, at any point during the forest school/camp day, if an adequate physical distance from other children, staff, or volunteers cannot be maintained.

1.2 Mask Use (continued)

- Children, staff and/or volunteers may choose to wear a mask at any time, additional to those times that mask use is required.
- Certain activities and areas of the “Cedar Grove” will be deemed as “mask on spaces” and all participants accessing this activity or area will be required to wear a mask.
- All children must bring 3 labelled non-medical masks to forest school each day and be comfortable with their proper use.
- Mask use policies may require changes throughout the session due to public health recommendations.

1.3 Hand Washing & Hand Sanitizing

- Hand washing and hand sanitizing is increased **significantly** and may take place when moving between tool use areas (ie mud kitchen, creek play, provocations). It will always occur before and after eating, after washroom use, and upon arrival to Cedar Grove in the morning.
- Hand washing stations are available both in Cedar Grove (during warmer months) and in the forest (and of course indoors).
- Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol content is provided by OMFS and is used after all meals, when using the washroom in the forest, upon arrival at Forest School/Camp and at other times as Educators see fit. *Please do not send hand sanitizer with your child.*
- Children must bring their own small hand towel for handwashing in the forest and at Cedar Grove.
- Proper hand washing techniques will be taught in a child friendly way and reviewed regularly.

1.4 Tool & Surface Sanitizing

- Any tools that cannot be properly sanitized are removed until safe to reintroduce.
- All tools used by children will be disinfected at the end of each forest school day or more often as educators see fit.
- Indoor surfaces and toys will be disinfected after each day or more often if educators see fit, if in use.
- The Horseshoe Resort chalet is cleaned according to their COVID-19 cleaning protocols each day and OMFS staff will arrange increased cleaning if the indoor space is used.
- Please do not send tools or toys to forest school/camp with your child. They will not be permitted to use them and will create unnecessary weight in their pack.

1.5 Indoor Space

- When groups are required to eat indoors, due to weather, the children, volunteers and educators will physically distance and sit with their small animal group. Masks will be used by all once the meal is over, and until back outside.
- Time spent indoors will be limited to more severe weather and groups will prioritize eating outside as long as it is suitable and safe to do so.
- Washroom use will be in small groups to maintain physical distancing when indoors.

1.6 Campfire Cooking & Food

- While campfires will remain a part of forest school/camp for the foreseeable future, campfire cooking is on hold temporarily.
- Until it is safe to do so again, tea will not be provided by educators and on cold days OMFS will encourage families to send thermoses of tea for their child.
- As always, children will be reminded that food is not to be shared at forest school/camp.
- Please ensure that your children are able to open and close their own food containers and packages. Educators will be available to help, with sanitized hands, if unexpected circumstances arise, though it is preferred that no one touches your child's lunch except themselves.

1.7 Gear and Labelling

- OMFS will be unable to lend out extra gear until further notice, *unless in an emergency situation.*
- Please be certain your child arrives prepared for their forest school/camp day with extra clothing items suitable for the season.
- Please refer to the section of the Parent Handbook for details on how to dress for forest school/camp.
- **All of your child's items MUST be labelled clearly.** Any unlabelled items not with your child's pack or in their cubby will be put into the lost and found.

OMFS has a fundraiser account with Loveable Label's. If you wish to purchase from that company our organization receives a portion of the sale in return.

www.OroMedonte.lovablelabels.ca

2. Group Sizes

- Arrival times will be staggered for each group of children:
 - One group will arrive at 9:15 and meet with their designated educators to begin their day.
 - The second group will arrive at 9:30 and meet with the other educators so that their day may begin once the other group has departed for the forest.
 - Children will be grouped together in animal groups of 5-6 to eat lunch, gather for small circles with a designated educator unless adequate space can be maintained for larger circle gatherings.
- Unless required for safety reasons (where masking and physical distancing will be strictly enforced) the two drop off groups (ie. Group A & Group B) will not congregate together.
- Groups will travel to the forest in numbers of 10-15 (children, staff, and volunteers included) for their daily adventures.

3. Program Closures

- Programs may be cancelled without notice if staff shortages occur.
- Programs will be cancelled without notice if SMDHU or the Province of Ontario deems that the site be closed.
- Program cancellation can happen prior to or during a day's programming. In the event that program cancellation occurs during the day, families will be notified and asked to pick their children up immediately.

4. COVID-19 Refund Policy

- Refunds will not be issued for illness as per the OMFS refund policy.
- Refunds will be issued if the program requires closure due to a requirement from the SMDHU or the Province of Ontario.
- Any closure of programs due to COVID-19 will be refunded based on days missed, noting that partial day closures will not be refunded.
- All registration fees and deposits paid for forest school are non-refundable. Deposits may be refunded or credited if the program cannot commence as scheduled and the entire duration of a session must be cancelled.
- Refunds will not be offered to individuals or families that are unable to attend due to a failure to properly follow staff instructions during drop-off and pick-up and/or the duration of the program, or that create an unsafe environment for others.

- The refund policy regarding illness and inclement weather cancellations remains unchanged, refunds are not available for these missed days.

5. Management of Suspected Cases & Exclusion Protocol

- Children/staff/volunteers displaying symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath/difficulty breathing, etc.) at forest school/camp will be isolated in a safe place with an educator (for children) and must be picked up or depart immediately. They will not be permitted to return until 14 days after the onset of symptoms, and only if clearance has been received from SMDHU unless negative test results are provided and symptoms are then absent for at least 24 hours.
- When there is a suspected case on-site, a 2-metre distance will be strictly enforced, and masks will be worn, until that participant can be picked up and further direction from SMDHU is provided.
- If staff : children ratios are changed due to staff needing to leave, based on symptoms, families may be required to pick up children.
- SMDHU will be notified of all suspected cases, testing will be encouraged, and extra vigilance in terms of cleaning and disinfecting will be exercised.
- SMDHU will be consulted when making decisions about who to contact, next steps, and whether or not to close, should an OMFS participant or staff test positive for COVID-19.

6. Responsibilities

6.1 Family Responsibilities

- Teach your child how to use their masks (covering their nose and mouth, and hold by the ear loops or ties), and provide them a safe place to store them when not in use.
- Teach your child proper handwashing techniques and hygiene strategies such as sneezing into their elbow, washing hands after touching their face, and using a tissue to wipe their nose.
- Help your child to learn to open and close all lunch and snack containers so as to limit someone other than your child touching their food. Practice with thermoses and water bottles at home as these are the most difficult to open for many children.
- Ensure that you complete a Covid Screen of your child before forest school/camp, including a temperature check.
- Provide your child with a small hand towel to be kept in their lunch bag.
- Help your child to understand how to physically distance themselves from others.
- Complete the Covid Screen online each day prior to attending a program.

- Read and sign this Memorandum of Understanding prior to the start of the program and following any required changes.
- Physical distance from all parents/caregivers/staff/children at drop off and pick up. Failure to do so may result in immediate cancellation without compensation.
- Communicate with OMFS if you have any concerns, if you think you or a family member may have had COVID-19 exposure, or regarding any travel your family has taken.

6.2 OMFS Responsibilities

- Ensure an Active Covid Screen of all participants, staff and volunteers upon arrival to forest school/camp each day.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers read, sign, and adhere to the Memorandum of Understanding when facilitating or attending any OMFS program.
- Provide ample hand washing and hand sanitizing opportunities for children and staff as described in the content above.
- Sanitize all tools, and provocations each day or more as required.
- Teach children physical distancing in a forest school environment.
- Ensure all staff are trained in and adhere to the COVID-19 policies.
- Maintain ongoing communication with Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit regarding COVID-19 policies.
- Communicate with families any changes to the above written policies, any potential exposure to COVID-19, or any concerns.

I, _____ (parent or guardian/staff/volunteer), have read, understood and agree to accept the additional responsibilities outlined in the OMFS Memorandum of Understanding which details the Covid-19 Specific Policies. I also understand and accept that although participants/families/individuals/staff will be encouraged to practice physical distancing from others, maintaining this physical distancing at all times is not guaranteed.

Signed: _____ Date: _____

Child's Name (if applicable): _____

**You may be asked to sign this again should there be any major updates throughout the session.*