



Health Guidance for Childcare and Schools Providing Childcare for Essential Persons

For child care facilities that remain open and for schools providing child care, it is crucial to minimize the risks of spreading coronavirus. The following guidance is designed to help maintain health and safety standards and social distancing directives while providing a much needed child care service.

This document serves as a supplement to Agency of Education guidance: [Supporting the Childcare Needs of Essential Persons During a Novel Coronavirus Outbreak Guidance to Schools and Child Care Programs](#)

Exclude children, staff, parents and guardians from sites if they are showing symptoms of COVID-19, have been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or are at high risk due to underlying health conditions.

Children Attending Care / Screening

- Conduct a Daily Health Check and ask children and staff:
 1. Have you been in close contact with a person who has COVID-19?
 2. Have you felt unwell with respiratory symptoms in the last few days? *For example, have you had a cough, high temperature, shortness of breath, or difficulty breathing?*
- Consider screening children and employees for fever, cough or shortness of breath upon arrival each day.
- People with a temperature greater than 100.4 F should be sent home until they have had no fever for 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., Advil, Tylenol).
- Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should remain isolated until:
 - At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery defined as resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath); AND,
 - At least 7 days have passed since symptoms first appeared.
- If symptoms begin while at the child care facility or school the child should be sent home as soon as possible. Keep sick children separate from well children and limit staff contact as much as possible, while ensuring the safety and supervision of the child until they leave.

Staff and Child Care Providers

The following individuals should not provide child care during this time:

- Adults 60 years of age and older
- People who have serious underlying medical conditions like:
 - Heart disease
 - Diabetes
 - Lung disease
 - Underlying immune disorders/people with compromised immune systems/people taking immune suppressant medications (examples of these disorders include Rheumatoid Arthritis, Crohns Disease, recent cancer treatment)*If individuals have specific questions about their own health conditions—they should contact their medical provider before providing child care*
- Pregnant women
- People with HIV

For home-based child care: If a household member has any of the conditions described above, providers should ensure social distancing (a minimum of 6 feet) between the child care children and the household member, ideally the household member would remain in rooms separate from the children. Cleaning/disinfecting guidance should also be followed, as described below.

All Individuals

If an individual believes they have had close contact with someone with confirmed COVID-19 but are not currently sick, they should monitor their health for fever, cough, and shortness of breath during the 14 days after the last day they were in close contact with the person with COVID-19. They should not go to work, child care, or school and should avoid public places for 14 days.

Close contact means being within 6 feet of someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 for a long time. This happens when caring for, being intimate partners with, living with, visiting, or sharing a health care waiting area.

Health Questions Resource for Child Care Services

The Department of Health has public health nurses available to child care programs and school providing child care services to answer health related child care questions from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM Monday through Friday. Call: **802-863-7240**, select the option for “**Child Care Programs**”. After hours there will be a childcare question mailbox to leave a message and VDH staff will return your call the following business days.

General Guidance

1. Children must be kept in small groups, not more than 10 individuals in a classroom, including teachers. Classrooms and outside play areas divided by gates or partial walls are considered one room and shall only serve one group of children. There must be absolutely no large group activities. Social distancing practices should be in place which means different groups of children should not have contact with one another.
2. Child care facilities and schools can maintain operations with an occupancy greater than 50 children as long as children are separated into classrooms as above and do not share common places (e.g. outside play area, eating areas, indoor gross motor rooms, etcetera) at the same time.
3. Child care services must follow the following handwashing practices. Specifically, staff must engage in frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds especially:
 - Upon arrival at school or child care program
 - After going to the bathroom
 - Before eating
 - After blowing one's nose
 - When visibly dirty

Teachers should help young children do the same. If soap and water are not readily available, closely supervise (to avoid ingestion) use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

4. Programs and schools should engage in frequent thorough cleaning each day. Child care programs shall follow regulations regarding cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Schools shall follow routine cleaning and disinfecting practices. Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces such as:
 - all surfaces especially where children eat
 - bathrooms
 - frequently used equipment including electronic devices
 - door handles and handrails
 - items children place in their mouths
5. There should be **no outside visitors and volunteers** with the exception of **employees or contracted service providers for the purpose of special education or required support services, as authorized by the school or district.**

6. Post signs. As part of routine measures for the respiratory season, existing signs should be visible that reminds staff, visitors, and children to perform hand hygiene (sneeze/cough into their elbow, put used tissues in a waste receptacle and to wash hands immediately after using tissues). Recommend everyone to avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes.

Resources

General questions about COVID-19? [Dial 2-1-1](#)

[Vermont Department of Health COVID-19 site](#)

[Parent and Caretaker guide for helping families cope with COVID 19](#)

[Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](#)

[Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - A Parent Resource \(English Resource\)](#)

[Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\) - A Parent Resource \(Spanish Resource\)](#)

Additional Strategies

PREPARE

- **Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.** Know where to turn for reliable, up-to-date information. Monitor the [CDC COVID-19 website](#) and the [Vermont Department of Health website](#) for the latest information.
- **Update an emergency contact list.** Update emergency contact lists for families, staff and key resources and ensure the lists are accessible in key locations in your facility. For example, know how to reach your local or state health department in an emergency.
- **Develop a communications plan.** A key component to being prepared is developing a communication plan that outlines how you plan to reach different audiences (e.g. families, staff, community) including ensuring all communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate as well as accessible for individuals with disabilities.

COMMUNICATE

- **Communicate about COVID-19 with your staff.** Share information about what is currently known about COVID-19 and your program's emergency response plans. Communicate your expectations for modeling respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick, and supporting employees who need to take care of a sick family members.
- **Communicate about COVID-19 families.** Provide updates about changes to your policies or operations. Use all communication channels available to you, including direct communications (face-to-face, letters), electronic communications (your program's or

school's website or social media pages), and parent meetings to share updates. *It is critical to maintain confidentiality for staff and children.* Make sure to plan ahead for linguistic needs, including providing interpreters and translating materials.

- **Intentionally and persistently combat stigma.** Misinformation about coronavirus and COVID-19 can create fear and hostility that hurts people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy. We're stronger as a community when we stand together against discrimination. Take advantage of these [resources](#) to prevent, interrupt, and respond to stigma.