



## NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

### Interim Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Child Care Settings

March 16, 2020

This guidance is intended to help child care facilities make informed decisions about COVID-19 and minimize the risk of exposure to both the staff and the children in their care. To reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission in our community, K-12 public schools in North Carolina will be closed [by order of the Governor](#) for at least two weeks, effective March 16, 2020. Child care centers and family child care homes have the option to remain open.

The same steps that a child care facility would take to prevent the spread of any other respiratory illness, such as flu, will also reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission.

Precautions that both staff and children should take include:

- Stay home when sick.
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice). In addition to usual handwashing, make sure to wash hands:
  - before and after eating meals and snacks
  - after blowing noses, coughing, or sneezing or when in contact with body fluidsFollow standard handwashing guidance for [adults](#) and [children](#).
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- Provide supplies including handwashing stations with soap and water, paper towels, and lined trash cans.
- Except for diapering or eating, preparing, or serving food, hand sanitizing products with 60% alcohol may be used in lieu of handwashing when outdoors if hands are washed upon returning indoors. Hand sanitizer must be stored out of reach of children when not in use.

#### When Someone is Sick

- Children and staff should remain home if sick.
- If a child or staff member develops the following symptoms, send them home as soon as possible:
  - Fever
  - Cough
  - Shortness of breath
- While waiting for a sick child to be picked up, caregivers should stay with the child in a room isolated from others. If the child has symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough,

shortness of breath), the caregiver should remain as far away as safely possible from the child (preferably, 6 feet). If facemasks are available, wear a facemask.

- ❑ Ensure that the facility has flexible sick leave and absentee policies that do not encourage people to come in while sick.

### Screening Criteria

- ❑ Conduct a [Daily Health Check](#) and ask children and staff:
  1. If they have had close contact (defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of someone for 10 minutes or more) with anyone diagnosed with COVID-19.
  2. If anyone in their household has symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath).
- ❑ 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 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., Advil, Tylenol).
  - Anyone diagnosed with COVID-19 should remain isolated until at least 7 days after symptom onset AND  $\geq 72$  hours after symptom resolution (absence of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication and improvement in respiratory symptoms) unless otherwise instructed by their local health department.
- ❑ For infants and young children, temperature can be taken by axillary (under the arm). For children over age four, temperature can be taken orally (under the tongue). Individual plastic covers should be used on oral thermometers with each use or thermometers should be cleaned and sanitized after each use according to the manufacturer's instructions. Another option for children ages six months and older is an ear or forehead thermometer with a disposable cover that is changed after each reading. Temperature should not be taken rectally in a child care setting.

### Additional Exclusion Criteria

- ❑ Follow standard [exclusion criteria](#) for illness.
- ❑ Anyone who has had close contact (defined by the CDC as being within 6 feet of someone for 10 minutes or more) with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 should remain home for 14 days after their last contact with the COVID-19 patient.
- ❑ If someone in their household has symptoms of respiratory illness, consider asking them to remain home until at least 7 days after symptom onset AND  $\geq 72$  hours after symptom resolution (absence of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication and improvement in respiratory symptoms).
- ❑ Recommend exclusion for children or staff who are considered high-risk, including older adults or people who have serious chronic medical conditions including:
  - Heart disease
  - Diabetes
  - Lung disease such as asthma
  - Compromised immune systems

### Limit Chances for Exposure

- Have parents drop off children outside the classroom. Staff should meet children as they are dropped off.
- Only staff needed to maintain ratio compliance should be inside classrooms.
- Cancel or postpone any planned field trips or outings to areas with large crowds of people.
- The [CDC recommend](#) cancelling or postponing any events of 50 people or more. For events with under 50 people in attendance, please refer to the [guidance for group gatherings](#).

### Helping the Community

- Children of healthcare workers and other key personnel may be in attendance during periods of school closure, even if they are school age. This will ensure that healthcare workers can continue to provide care community during the outbreak.
  - Teacher-to-child ratio should be based on the age of the youngest child present.
- Ask these children to bring schoolwork and/or age-appropriate entertainment (e.g., books, toys) with them.

### Clean Thoroughly

- Follow regular cleaning protocols and use an [EPA-registered disinfectant that is active against coronaviruses](#). Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day and at night.
- Keep a designated bin for separating mouthed toys and maintain awareness of children's behaviors. When a child is done with a mouthed toy, remove it, place it in a toy bin that is inaccessible to other children, and wash hands. Clean and sanitize toys before returning to children's area.
- Clean and sanitize all toys at the end of the day.
- Consider removing soft toys that cannot be easily cleaned during the coronavirus outbreak. Soft toys that are machine-washable should be washed often at the warmest temperature recommended on the label and dried thoroughly.

### Be Prepared

- [Stay informed](#) about the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in [children](#) and [adults](#). Children typically have milder disease than adults.
- Plan ahead in case the facility needs to close:
  - Determine how staff will communicate with staff and parents.
  - If a patient with COVID-19 was in the building, the facility may need to close briefly (2-5 days) for cleaning and disinfection.
  - If COVID-19 is circulating in your community, the facility may receive direction from local public health officials to close for a longer period of time.

- The facility may need to close if child care cannot safely be provided due to a high number of staff being out of work.

For more information, please see the following sources:

- [NC COVID-19 website](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 website](#)
- [NC environmental cleaning guidance](#)
- [CDC guidance for schools and childcare facilities](#)