

COVID-19 Guidance: Child Care Centers and Homes

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Planning guidance for Child Care Centers and Homes

As the global outbreak of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) evolves, child care providers are encouraged to prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks in the United States. Use this guidance to plan and make decisions now that will protect the health of children in your care and your community.

Review, update, and implement emergency plans in cooperation with local partners:

- Ensure the plan includes strategies to reduce the spread of a wide variety of infectious diseases (e.g., seasonal influenza) and build on everyday policies and practices.
- Ensure the plan emphasizes common-sense preventive actions for children and staff.
 - Staying home when sick
 - Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or inside of elbow
 - Cleaning and disinfecting (using an EPA registered disinfectant) frequently touched surfaces
 - Washing hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (only using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available).
- Share your emergency plans with local partners (e.g., local public health and local emergency management) and ensure your plans outline how regular information sharing will occur.

Monitor and plan for absenteeism due to illness:

- Track child and staff absence due to illness.
- For centers, report greater than 10% absenteeism due to illness to your local Child Care Nurse Consultant (CCNC) or local public health and your DHS licensing consultant.
- Review illness policies. Encourage children and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
- Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.
- Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of care and child/staff ratio. Determine if you have sufficient staff to maintain ratio and supervise children in care.

Review procedures for excluding children and staff who are ill:

- Ensure children and staff who become ill at child care are sent home as soon as possible. Keep ill children and staff separate from well children and staff until they can leave.
- Review COVID-19 signs and symptoms. Symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure and can include:
 - **Fever** (100.4°F-101°F and above). For fever guidelines see *Common Child Care Illnesses and Exclusion Criteria* <https://www.idph.iowa.gov/hcci/products>)
 - **Cough**
 - **Shortness of breath**
- Remember that child care providers are not expected to screen children or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If a community has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.
- Share resources to help families understand when to keep children home. This guidance, not specific to COVID-19, from the American Academy of Pediatrics can be helpful for families <https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/When-to-Keep-Your-Child-Home-from-Child-Care.aspx>.

Perform routine environmental cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting:

- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, sinks) with an EPA registered disinfectant. Use all products according to the directions on the label.
- For cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting guidelines refer to Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards; Guidelines for Early Care and Education Programs, 4th ed. (2019) **Appendix K** <https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AppendixK.pdf> and Healthy Child Care Iowa **Using Chemicals Wisely** <https://www.idph.iowa.gov/hcci/products>

Review communications plans:

- Review plans for sharing information with staff, children, and their families.
- Include information about steps being taken by your child care facility to prepare, and how additional information will be shared.
- Parents may be concerned and children may worry and have questions. Your confidence and calm attitude will help children feel safe and secure. For more information go to <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus> and click on **Fact sheet: Talking to Children About COVID-19**

Guidance for child care with identified cases of COVID-19 in their community

If public health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, child care may need to take additional steps to prevent spread in the child care facility and community. Child care programs considering closing or cancelling events should seek specific guidance from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and their local public health department to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps. Large event cancellations, school or child care closure may be recommended for 14 days, or possibly longer if advised by public health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., geographic scope, duration) may change as the local outbreak situation evolves. If you are directed by public health to temporarily close, contact your DHS regulatory consultant.

Planning and Communication Resources

Utilize these key resources while reviewing, updating, and implementing emergency plans and communicating with families and staff about COVID-19.

- Iowa Department of Public Health <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>
- COVID-19 Webinar for Child Care Homes and Centers <https://idph.iowa.gov/Emerging-Health-Issues/Novel-Coronavirus>
- Healthy Child Care Iowa <https://www.idph.iowa.gov/hcci>
- Iowa Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Emergency Preparedness <https://iowaccrr.org/training/ep/>
- Centers for Disease Control <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html>
- Child Care Aware of America <https://info.childcareaware.org/blog/coronavirus-updates-and-resources-for-child-care-providers-and-ccrrs>