

Child Care During the Covid-19 Outbreak

Many parents continue to need child care for young children and school-age children. The Governor closed all Washington schools through the end of the school year to prevent the coronavirus from spreading.

Parents who are able to keep their children home should do so, but this is not always possible. Child care is important for our medical workers, first responders and others working during this public health emergency.

Open child care facilities need to reduce the risk of spreading coronavirus. The following guidance will help child care facilities, early learning providers, and schools offering care, to maintain health and safety standards and social distancing orders.

General guidance

Do not allow children, staff, parents and guardians on-site if they:

- Are showing signs of COVID-19.
- Have been in close contact* with someone who has confirmed or suspected COVID-19 in the last 14 days.
- Are at high risk due to certain health conditions.

*Health care providers and EMS workers who wore proper personal protective equipment (PPE) are OK.

People at High Risk for Serious Health Problems from COVID-19

Those at high risk for health problems from COVID-19 are:

- People age 65 years and older
- People who are pregnant
- People who have certain health conditions, such as a weakened immune system or respiratory condition like severe asthma

These people should consult with their health care provider and consider not providing child care or visiting child care facilities.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

- Small groups should take turns with drop-off and pick-up times. This will help with social distancing outside the facility or in front of the facility.
- Wash hands or use hand gel before and after signing in and out. If you can, place hand gel near sign-in station. Hand gel should be at least 60% alcohol, fragrance-free, and kept out of the reach of children.
- Parents should use their own pen when signing in. If check-in is electronic, provide alcohol wipes that have 70% alcohol in it and clean the screens or keyboards often.

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- Suggest families have the same adult drop off and pick up the child each day.

Health Screening at Entry

Check for signs of being sick for all staff and children at entry each day.

Centers for Disease Control (CDC) suggests using any of these three screening methods:

1. **Social Distancing:** Ask the parent or guardian to take the child's temperature at home, or at the facility in front of you, but at least 6 feet away. At drop-off and pick-up times with the child's family, keep at least a 6 foot distance.
2. **Barrier/Partition:** Stand behind a physical barrier such as glass or plastic to do the screening.
3. **Personal Protective Equipment (PPE):** Do health screening and temperature checks while wearing PPE. In Washington State PPE is in short supply and [needs to be saved for health care workers](#).

The first two ways of doing health screenings are the best options right now. For more information, please see the [CDC guidance](#).

Ask the parents or guardians if the child has any of the following since the last time they were in care:

- A fever of 100.4°F or higher or a sense of having a fever?
- A cough that you cannot connect to another health problem?
- Shortness of breath that you cannot connect to another health problem?
- A sore throat that you cannot connect to another health problem?
- Muscle aches that you cannot connect to another health problem or to another activity such as physical exercise?
- Does anyone in your household have any of the above signs right now?
- Has your child been close with anyone suspected or confirmed with COVID-19?
- Has your child had any medication to reduce a fever before coming to care?

Child care rules still do not allow providers to care for children who have other signs of being sick such as diarrhea and vomiting.

Do not care for the child if the answer to any of the above questions is "yes." Refer to "Returning to a child care facility after suspected COVID-19 symptoms" below.

If the answer to all of the above questions is "no", check the child for signs of being sick, such as flushed cheeks, tiredness, and extreme fussiness. Keep a distance of at least 6 feet of space or have a physical barrier between you and the child.

Temperature Check

The parent or guardian should take the child's temperature before coming to the facility or in front of the child care provider and then report the finding. The child care provider should stay at least 6 feet away from the parent or child during the temperature check. The child care should have a clean thermometer to use in case a parent does not have one or forgets to bring

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one. Clean the thermometer and disinfect it with 70% alcohol after each use. If a child care provider does the temperature check, they should do it by reaching around a clear physical barrier, such as glass or plastic (method 2 above) or wear PPE (method 3 above). Child care providers doing health screenings must use proper hand hygiene and wear gloves.

Social Distancing

Reduce group sizes to no more than 10 children and adults total. For example, one adult and nine children or two adults and eight children. Keep groups together throughout the day. Do not combine groups at opening and closing, and keep staffing the same within each group. If you can, keep the same groups from day to day. Do not have float staff that provide breaks in each classroom. If float staff are absolutely necessary, have them wear a cloth face covering. All this will help to reduce exposure.

To create space between people in a group, limit each room to 10 people total in a child care facility or elementary school. You can divide large spaces (like full-size gyms or cafeterias) into two program areas by creating a barrier with equipment such as cones, chairs, or tables to maintain 6 feet between the two groups.

Put in place social distancing within groups. Create space between children and reduce the amount of time children are close with each other. Your ability to do this will depend on the age of the children. It may be possible with school age children but not with toddlers.

Practical tips to maintain social distancing:

- Limit the number of children in each program space.
- Increase the distance between children during table work.
- Plan activities that do not need close physical contact.
- Limit item sharing. If children share items, remind them not to touch their faces and wash their hands after using these items. Younger children should have their own set of items to avoid sharing.
- Remove any items that cannot easily be cleaned and disinfected, including sand or water tables, stuffed animals, and play dough.
- Maintain 6 feet of distance and reduce time standing in lines.
- Go outside more and open windows often.
- Increase space between cribs and nap mats to 6 feet if you can.
- Adjust the HVAC system or open windows to allow for more fresh air to enter the program space.
- Do not bring separate groups together for any reason.

Outside Play

Offer outdoor play in staggered shifts. If two or more groups are outside at the same time, they should have at least 6 feet of open space between them. If you can, have equipment such as balls and jump ropes for each group. Always wash hands right after outdoor play time. Do not use play structures such as climbers or slides.

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Meals and Snack Time

Provide meals and snacks in the classroom to prevent a large group gathering. If you provide meals or snacks in a large lunchroom, stagger meal times and make sure tables are at least 6 feet apart. Space children as far apart as you can at the table. Clean and sanitize tables before and after each group eats. The child care provider (not children) should handle utensils and serve food to reduce spread of germs. Stop tooth brushing activities at this time.

Infant and Toddler Care

Infants and toddlers need to be held. To protect themselves, child care providers who care for infants and toddlers should wear a long-sleeved, button down, oversized shirt over their clothing and wear long hair up or tied back. Change outer clothing if body fluids from the child get on it. Change the child's clothing if body fluids get on it. Place the soiled clothing in a plastic bag until it is washed. Wrap infants in a thin blanket when you hold them. Child care providers should wash their hands and anywhere else the child touched them (such as their neck or arm) after holding a child.

Hygiene Practices

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Require handwashing per child care rules. Children and adults should wash hands when they arrive at the child care, enter the classroom, before meals or snacks, after outside time, after going to the bathroom, after nose blowing or sneezing, and before leaving to go home. Help young children to make sure they are doing it right.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand gel with at least 60% alcohol and preferably fragrance-free. Per child care rules, alcohol-based hand gels are not allowed for children under age 2.
- Children, families, and staff should not touch their eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. Clean hands with soap and water or hand gel (if soap and water are not readily available).

Cloth Face Coverings

CDC issued [new recommendations](#) that wearing homemade cloth face coverings may help prevent the spread of COVID-19 in our community. When able, staff members and older children should wear cloth face coverings within the child care. To decide if cloth face coverings are possible, consider:

- Cloth face coverings may reduce the risk of someone who may be infected but is not showing signs from spreading the disease to others.
- All social distancing guidance for child care facilities must still be followed, even if cloth face coverings are worn.
- When wearing cloth face coverings, keep hands away from the face and do not touch them. Closely watch children wearing cloth face coverings at all times.
- Cloth face coverings should be washed with soap and dried between uses.

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- For safety, children under the age of 2 should not wear cloth face coverings.
- Face coverings are not for anyone who cannot take it off themselves.

To learn more about cloth face coverings, see the [CDC Recommendations for the use of cloth face coverings](#) and [Washington State Department of Health Guidance on Cloth Face Coverings](#).

Transportation

Do not transport children at this time. If you must provide transportation, create space between riders. For example, one rider per seat in every other row. Keep windows open to help reduce the spread of the virus. Clean buses with a third party certified, fragrance-free green cleaner and microfiber cloths. Clean and disinfect handrails. Keep windows open to prevent buildup of chemicals that cause eye and respiratory problems.

What to do if children, staff, or parents develop signs of COVID-19

If a child or staff member develops signs of COVID-19, such as a fever of 100.4 or higher, cough or shortness of breath while at the facility, place the person in a room away from the well people until the sick person can leave the facility. The person with symptoms should follow [DOH guidance for what to do if you have symptoms for COVID-19 and have not been around anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19](#). If signs persist or get worse, call a health care provider for more guidance. Tell the employee or child's parent or caregiver to inform the facility right away if the person is diagnosed with COVID-19.

If a child or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, all members of the infected child's or adult's group is a close contact and should self-quarantine for 14 days. Refer to ["What to do if you were potentially exposed to someone with confirmed coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\)?"](#)

Returning to a child care facility after suspected signs of COVID-19

A staff member or child who has signs of suspected or confirmed COVID-19 can return to the child care facility when:

- At least 3 days (72 hours) have passed since recovery – defined as no fever without the use of medications and improvement in respiratory signs like cough and shortness of breath;

AND

- At least 7 days have passed since signs first showed up.

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

Cleaning and disinfecting procedures

Clean, sanitize, and disinfect throughout the day. Follow licensing guidance, but increase

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how often you clean.

- *Cleaning* removes germs, dirt, food, body fluids, and other material. Cleaning increases the benefit of sanitizing or disinfecting.
- *Sanitizing* reduces germs on surfaces to levels that are safe.
- *Disinfecting* kills germs on surfaces of a clean object.
- The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) regulates sanitizer and disinfectant chemicals. If you sanitize or disinfect without cleaning first, it will reduce how well these chemicals work and may leave more germs on the object.

Current [guidance for cleaning and disinfection for COVID-19](#) from the CDC states that disinfectants should be registered by the EPA for use against the novel coronavirus. See [List N: Disinfectants for Use Against SARS-CoV-2](#). Disinfectants based on hydrogen peroxide or alcohol are safer. The University of Washington has a handout with options for [safer cleaning and disinfecting products](#) that work well against COVID-19.

If you use a bleach and water mixture for disinfection, mix it at a concentration of 4 teaspoons of 6% bleach per quart of cool water or 5 tablespoons 6% bleach (1/3 cup) per gallon of cool water (1000 ppm). Thoroughly clean surfaces with soap and water and remove the soap with water before applying the bleach solution. Keep the surface wet for at least one minute. Use this higher concentration if a confirmed or suspected case of COVID-19 has been in the child care. You may also use it at the end of each day when children have left on high touch surfaces.

Always follow the disinfectant instructions on the label:

- **Use disinfectants in a ventilated space. Heavy use of disinfectant products should be done when children are not present and the facility can air out before children return.**
- Use the proper concentration of disinfectant.
- Keep the disinfectant on the surface for the required wet contact time.
- Follow the product label warnings and instructions for PPE such as gloves, eye protection, and ventilation.
- Keep all chemicals out of reach of children.
- Child care facilities must have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical used in the facility.

More information about cleaning, disinfecting and choosing safer products is on the DOH COVID-19 website. If your program is in a public school building, coordinate the use of chemical products with the school maintenance staff.

Clean and sanitize toys, equipment, and surfaces in the rooms. Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces like doorknobs, faucet handles, check-in counters, and restrooms. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboards and electronics. Wash hands after you clean. Reduce the spread of germs in the program space by removing toys that are not easily cleaned such as stuffed animals and pillows. Rotate toys that are out at any one time, so they can be cleaned

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and sanitized.

If groups of children are moving from one area to another in shifts, finish cleaning before the new group enters this area. Clean and disinfect high touch surfaces each night after children leave.

Carpets

Vacuum daily when children are not present. HEPA filter equipped vacuums will help remove dust and particles. Follow child care rules for how often you should shampoo the carpet. Use a blanket or towel on carpeted floors under infants or young toddlers.

Ventilation

There is no special cleaning or disinfection for heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) systems. Ventilation is important to have good indoor air quality. Offer more outside time, open windows often, and adjust the HVAC system to allow more fresh air to enter the program space.

Shared Hands-On Teaching Materials

Clean and sanitize hands-on materials often and after each use. You cannot clean and sanitize some things like playdough, so do not use or label separate containers for each child. Take away water tables, sensory tables, stuffed animals, dress up clothes, and other items that are not cleaned easily. Limit shared teaching materials to those you can easily clean and sanitize or disinfect. Use separate bins of toys for each infant or toddler as they tend to put toys in their mouths. Children's books and other paper-based materials are not high risk for spreading the virus.

COVID-19 Resources for Schools and Child Care

- DOH: [K-12 School Nurse and Administrator Resources & Recommendations](#)
- DOH: [2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- DOH: [Classroom Cleaning - Tips for Teachers](#)
- DOH: [Handwashing to Prevent Illness at School](#)
- DOH: [Cleaning and Disinfection for Asthma Safe Schools](#)
- CDC: [Interim guidance for Schools and Child Care](#)
- CDC: [Supplemental Guidance for Childcare Programs that Remain Open](#)
- [Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring the New Coronavirus](#)
- [Public Health Seattle-King County Child Care Recommendations](#)
- [Snohomish Health District COVID-19 Information for Schools and Child Care](#)
- DOH: [Recommend or Order Closure of Child Care Facilities](#)

More COVID-19 Information and Resources

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Stay up-to-date on the [current COVID-19 situation in Washington](#), [Governor Inslee's proclamations](#), [symptoms](#), [how it spreads](#), and [how and when people should get tested](#). See our [Frequently Asked Questions](#) for more information.

The risk of COVID-19 is not connected to race, ethnicity or nationality. [Stigma will not help to fight the illness](#). Share accurate information with others to keep rumors and misinformation from spreading.

- [WA State Department of Health 2019 Novel Coronavirus Outbreak \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [WA State Coronavirus Response \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Find Your Local Health Department or District](#)
- [CDC Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [Stigma Reduction Resources](#)

Have more questions about COVID-19? Call our hotline: **1-800-525-0127**. For interpretative services, **press #** when they answer and **say your language**. (Open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.) For questions about your own health, COVID-19 testing, or testing results, please contact your health care provider.

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