

Reducing the Spread of COVID-19 in Early Care and Education/ Child Care Programs

A Mitigation Checklist for Providers and Caregivers

Mitigation efforts refer to methods that make it harder for COVID-19 to spread. This checklist, which should be used along with the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\) updated Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#), is designed to help your Early Care and Education (ECE) and child care programs reduce the spread of COVID-19 among children, staff, direct service providers, and families. All types of ECE and child care programs (child care centers, home-based and family child care, Head Start, pre-kindergarten, after-school, and summer programs) can use this checklist, which is divided into sections based on different prevention strategies. Although some strategies listed within this checklist are COVID-19 specific, there are strategies listed in this tool that are ‘everyday operations’. For more information and resources, please visit the links found at the end of each section.

Directions: This checklist can be completed by any staff person providing child care but is best used if completed by the person(s) with decision-making authority, such as an administrator or director. If you are not the director or other person(s) in charge, ask if they will complete this checklist with you so your staff/team can decide together what potential changes need to be made. Please note that this checklist does not provide a score but serves as a self-evaluation tool. Upon completion, the program administrator or director should contact the appropriate child care consultant or CCR&R to strengthen COVID-19 practices. Child Care Aware of America is also offering technical assistance (TA) and a suite of relevant resources. To request TA, please [click here](#).

Pre-Checklist Screening:

Program Information	
Date of Completion:	
Completed By:	
Person(s) in Charge (Administrator/Director): Staff Person (Support Staff or Classroom Lead):	
Program Name:	
Program County, State:	
Type of child care Program:	<input type="checkbox"/> Home-based or family child care <input type="checkbox"/> Child care center <input type="checkbox"/> Head-Start/Early Head-Start <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Ages of Children Served: (Select all that apply)	<input type="checkbox"/> Less than 1 year of age <input type="checkbox"/> From age 1 up to age 2 <input type="checkbox"/> From age 2 up to age 4 <input type="checkbox"/> From age 4 up to age 5 <input type="checkbox"/> School-aged children
Total number of enrolled children: Center/Building capacity :	

Average number of attending children: <i>(Calculate average over a 4-week period)</i>	
Total number of available classrooms/child-occupied spaces:	
Total number of in-use classrooms/child-occupied spaces:	
Service capacity of your child care facility: <i>(Capacity facility is licensed for)</i>	
Staff Information	
Total Number of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-Time Staff: • Part-Time Staff: • Administrative/Office Staff: • Other/Support Staff: 	FT: _____ PT: _____ A/O: _____ Other: _____
Do staff travel between programs/sister-programs or buildings? <i>(If Yes, please describe how often)</i>	
Program Points of Contact (POC) <i>For child care homes and similar smaller ECE spaces, please list as most appropriate.</i>	
COVID-19 Coordinator	Name:
	Email:
	Phone Number:
Facility Maintenance	Name:
	Email:
	Phone Number:
Local Public Health Agency OR <i>child care Consultant</i>	Name:
	Email:
	Phone Number:
State Public Health Agency (<i>Regional Specialist</i>)	Name:
	Email:
	Phone Number:
Community Information	
Are you familiar with using local/state COVID-19 websites to find regularly updated information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does your ECE program direct families and staff to a COVID-19 testing facility? <i>(If yes, please provide facility information)</i>	
Additional Information:	

Section 1: Planning and Preparing

- a. Does your program have an Emergency Operations Plan (EOP)?

Yes No Unsure

- b. Does your program have a plan for contacting parents, guardians, caregivers, staff, and direct service providers if there is a positive case or outbreak in the facility?

Yes No Unsure

- c. Is there an established process for closing the center? For example, what would you do if there was an outbreak among a child/student or staff?

Yes No Unsure

- d. If the program must temporarily close and a child must isolate or quarantine because of COVID-19 exposure, is there a way for critical services such as The Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) to be continued?

Yes No Unsure

Resources & Guidance:

1. [Emergency preparedness manual](#) support for child care programs by National Center on Early Childhood Health and Wellness.
2. [Out-of-School Time Emergency Preparedness, Response, and Recovery Toolkit](#) by the National Center on Afterschool and Summer Enrichment.
3. [CDC's COVID-19 tracker by county](#) to view updated COVID-19 rates in your county.
4. Look up your [local health department](#) to view updated COVID-19 rates in your community.
5. [Child Care Emergency Preparedness resources](#) by Child Care Aware of America.

Section 2: Screening, Illness, and Communicating Symptoms & Cases

- a. Has it been shared in writing when children and/or staff should not attend the program if they are sick with COVID-19 or similar symptoms, or if they have recently been in close contact with someone with COVID-19, AND how long they should remain isolated or quarantined?

Yes No Unsure

- b. Has it been shared in writing when children and/or staff who have been unable to attend the program due to COVID-19 symptoms, infection, or exposure are allowed to return?

Yes No Unsure

- g. Has it been communicated that children and providers should wash their hands with soap and water at the following key times? (check all that apply)

Arrival at the facility

Before and after preparing food, drinks, or bottles

Before and after eating or handling food, or feeding children

Before and after helping a child put on or adjust their mask

Before and after administering medication or medical ointment

Before and after completing a diaper change

After using the bathroom or assisting a child in the bathroom

After having contact with bodily fluids

After handling garbage or other waste

After touching or removing a mask

- h. Are there written procedures for staff to change clothes or other garments after coming in contact with bodily fluids? Yes No Unsure

Resources & Guidance:

1. Review the [CDC's handwashing](#) guidance.
2. [FDA's safe use of hand sanitizer](#) to keep staff and children safe.
3. [CDC's mask wearing](#) guidance for unvaccinated people.

Section 4: Classes/Cohorts and Physical Distancing

- a. Are children divided into groups or cohorts in which they interact with the same peers and caregiver(s) each day? Yes No Unsure NA
- b. Are close-contact activities (e.g. art, music, etc.) and playground schedules staggered to limit mixing of classes/cohorts? Yes No Unsure
- c. Are there written procedures for increasing the distance of sleeping cots, mats, and cribs as much as possible during nap time? Yes No Unsure
- d. For chest/breastfeeding parents and guardians, are there spaces physically distant (e.g. at least 6 feet apart) to allow for safe infant nursing areas?
 Yes No Unsure NA
- e. Are there staggered drop-off, pick-up, or other child arrival/departure times in place to allow classes/cohorts decreased contact and mixing? Yes No Unsure
- f. Is there curbside drop-off/pick-up to limit direct contact of parents, guardians, caregivers, or staff Yes No Unsure

- g. Are there written procedures for van-share or bus-ride programs to maximize physical distancing during transport? Yes No Unsure NA

Resources & Guidance:

1. [CDC's quick guide](#) to protect your child care center from COVID-19: Visual map to help create a safer child care center space.
2. [Drop Off/Pick Up](#) resources by Caring for Our Children (CFOC).
3. Check to see if your [local health department](#) or state health department has developed protocols for operating child care centers safely during COVID-19.
4. [Resources on school bus safety](#) for riders and drivers.

Section 5: Cleaning and Disinfecting

- a. Are staff properly trained on appropriate cleaning and disinfecting procedures?
Yes No Unsure
- b. Are staff properly trained on the EPA's *Six Steps for Safe and Effective Disinfectant Use*?
Yes No Unsure
- c. Does the facility have a written cleaning and disinfecting routine?
Yes No Unsure
- d. Does the facility have a janitorial service routinely clean and disinfect once children and staff have left the building? Yes No Unsure
- e. Is the cleaning checklist monitored or reviewed for completion?
Yes No Unsure
- f. If your program utilizes transport vehicles, such as buses or vans, do staff disinfect them after each use?

Yes No Unsure
- h. Do you wait at least 24 hours before cleaning *and* disinfecting any areas, items, or equipment used by a sick person? Yes No Unsure NA
- i. If you can't wait at least 24 hours before cleaning *and* disinfecting any areas, items, or equipment used by a sick person, do you wait *as long as possible*?
Yes No Unsure NA
- j. In areas that cannot be cleaned after 24 hours after exposure, is the ventilation in the area increased/enhanced (i.e. running a fan overnight or opening windows for an extended period)
?Yes No Unsure NA

Resources & Guidance:

1. CDC's recommendations on [cleaning and disinfecting](#) your facility.
2. Review [EPA's 6 Steps for Safe and Effective Disinfectant Use](#).

3. [Examples](#) of developing a schedule for routine cleaning.
4. [Cleaning and sanitizing objects intended for the mouth](#) from Caring for Our Children (CFOC).
5. [Cleaning and sanitizing toys](#) guidance from CFOC.
6. [CDC's guide](#) on cleaning and disinfecting non-emergency transport vehicles.
7. Cleaning and disinfecting [best practices from EPA](#).

Section 6: Immunizations

- a. Are staff and children (who meet current vaccine age requirements) required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination? Yes No Unsure
- b. Has administration and/or other person(s) in charge determined and outlined COVID-19 vaccination requirements for staff? Yes No Unsure
- c. Are staff encouraged to get vaccinated against COVID-19 through visible posters, announcements, or other communication methods and accessible in the languages spoken by staff's families? Yes No Unsure
- d. Will there be an outreach and education plan ready for families regarding the COVID-19 Vaccine once it is available to young children? Yes No Unsure
- e. Is there a plan to partner with local health departments or community health centers to provide vaccinations to children, staff, and families once available to young children?
 Yes No Unsure

Resources and Guidance:

1. Understanding what it means to be [fully vaccinated](#) against COVID-19.
2. Additional information regarding the [Pfizer vaccine](#), [Moderna vaccine](#), and [Johnson & Johnson vaccine](#) are available here.
3. [CDC's vaccine toolkit](#) for child care programs includes materials to communicate with staff and ways to promote vaccination.
4. [Learn how COVID-19 vaccines can impact the ECE field](#) through a webinar from Child Care Aware of America.
5. [COVID-19 vaccine overview factsheet](#) and [vaccine FAQs](#) from Child Care Aware of America.

Section 7: Staff Resilience & Support

- a. Is there a plan for open communication, training, and support for staff as they adapt to changes and difficult circumstances, and are staff invited to offer input in decisions about new processes and procedures? Yes No Unsure
- b. Are stress reduction strategies shared with staff such as [mindfulness](#), social support, deep breathing, and spending time in nature or outside? Yes No Unsure
- c. Has the administrator contacted your [local Child Care Resource & Referral agency](#) to find out if there are any professional development or in-services offerings for staff related to self-care?
 Yes No Unsure

- d. Are staff encouraged to talk about their concerns and feelings with people they trust?
Yes No Unsure
- e. Is there a plan for all staff meetings and/or trainings to be within updated guidelines of local, state, or other national health agencies and/or organizations (i.e. virtual trainings/meetings, socially distant in-person meetings)? Yes No Unsure
- f. Are mental health support services readily available to staff and their families, such as through an Employee Assistance Program? Note: Communications should be accessible to persons with disabilities and limited English proficiency. Yes No Unsure
- g. Are facts regularly shared with staff about COVID-19 from trusted sources such as your [local/state health department](#) or [CDC](#) to reduce the spread of misinformation and ease fear?
Yes No Unsure
- h. Are there posters, announcements, or other forms of communication for the [Disaster Distress Helpline](#)? Yes No Unsure
- i. Are staff provided appropriate (flexible and non-punitive) leave or other time off to allow for mental health support? Yes No Unsure
- j. Are staff provided with the information to call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255), 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish, or [Lifeline Crisis Chat](#) if they are [feeling overwhelmed with emotions](#) such as sadness, depression, anxiety; or call 911 if they feel like they want to harm themselves or others? Yes No Unsure

Resources and Guidance:

1. Familiarize yourself with [COVID-19 mental health support services](#).
2. Children and young people’s social, emotional, and mental health [resources + recommendations by age group](#).
3. [AAP’s guidance](#) related to child care during COVID-19.
4. Child Care Aware of America’s [webinar recording](#): Practical Ways to Help Children in Child Care Cope with the COVID-19 Crisis.

Appendix: Key Terms and Definitions

Emergency Operations Plan (EOC) – A plan that is developed in collaboration with regulatory agencies and state/local public health departments to describe prevention strategies for public health emergencies such as Covid-19. This plan should:

- describe steps to take when a child or staff member has been exposed to someone with Covid-19, has symptoms of Covid-19, or tests positive Covid-19.
- document policy or protocol differences for people who are fully vaccinated for COVID-19 versus those who are not fully vaccinated.
- consider the range of needs among staff, children, and families, including children’s developmental needs, children with disabilities, children with healthcare needs, and children experiencing homelessness.

Close/Direct Contact – Any level of contact of less than six (6) feet for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period.

CDC Approved Sanitizer – Alcohol-based sanitizer that contains at least 60% ethanol.

Child Care Health Consultant – An official of the local public health department that works with child care centers and family care homes to assess, plan, implement, and evaluate strategies to achieve high quality, safe, and healthy child care environments by focusing on topics that include, childhood immunizations, childhood nutrition, risk reduction, emergency preparedness, and dental health.

Regional Child Care Health Specialist – An official of the state health department that serves as the primary area (region-specific) child care health consultant.

Cohort – Keeping people together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout an entire day. This strategy is often used to avoid mixing different groups to limit the spread of COVID-19 and potentially isolation or quarantine resulting from a confirmed or suspected case.