

Dallas County Child Care/Day Care Guidance to Prevent Transmission of Respiratory Viral Infections Including COVID-19

Recent scientific evidence indicates that COVID-19 is spread almost entirely by virus-containing droplets and aerosols that infected people project into the air by breathing, talking, laughing, yelling, coughing or sneezing; whereas, spread by contamination on surfaces is of secondary importance. This is complicated by the fact that the virus can be readily spread not only by infected people who are sick but also by people who are infected but who do not feel ill. Therefore, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 from childcare/daycare centers, the most important measures are those that prevent person-to-person or infected people from spreading it.

Strategies in childcare and daycare focus on 1. Identifying cases; 2. Isolating potential cases; 3. Developing processes to assure physical distancing measures are enforced; 4. Preventing transmission using masking, cleaning and hand hygiene.

This document includes content from CDC Guidance, Texas Health and Human Service Commission (HHSC) rules and recommendations from medical and public health experts. Providers are responsible for following all guidance or regulations from CDC or HHSC as applicable to their organization.

For the full CDC document from which much of the content was obtained or any issues with hyperlinks please visit, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

For the full Texas HHSC document or issue with hyperlinks please visit, <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2020/06/new-emergency-rules-child-day-care-providers-effective-june-25-2020>

Have a plan at every childcare/daycare program to protect staff, children, and their families from the spread of COVID-19.

Encourage staff to take [everyday preventive actions](#) to prevent the spread of respiratory illness.

- Assure that there are adequate sinks or hand sanitizer stations.
- [Wash hands](#) often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol.
- [Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces](#).
- [Cover cough and sneezes](#).
- Cover your mouth and nose with a facial covering when you have to go out in public.
- Have staff wear facial coverings.
- Encourage children over two to wear facial coverings.
- Do NOT place facial coverings on babies and children under age two because of the risk of suffocation.

- Have multiple changes of clothes on hand in the childcare/daycare center or home-based childcare/daycare for infants, toddlers, and their providers. Children may not wear clothes other than their own.
- Daycare/Childcare centers should only have activities where children from within the same classroom interact. This could be in the classroom or on a playground, but children from different classes/groups/rooms should not interact.
- STAFF from different classrooms should not interact. The facility should minimize (or eliminate) the possibility of any staff member having to go into different classrooms on the same day.
- Encourage age-appropriate COVID-19 related education, so children are not just being told to wear masks, and are learning about masking and infections (and hand hygiene, etc).
- Encourage every family with children at the school/daycare to monitor ALL members of their households for symptoms of COVID-19 daily. If any one person in the house has any symptoms consistent with COVID-19, all the kids should remain at home until COVID-19 has been excluded (or if it is diagnosed, then follow CDC guidelines for isolating).
- All care givers need to have infection prevention education as outlined in HHSC regulations.

Require sick children and staff to stay home.

- Parents must keep children home when they are sick.
- Staff should be vigilant for respiratory symptoms and staying in touch with facility management if or when they start to feel sick.
- If children or staff come to the childcare/daycare center sick, they must be sent home. Additionally, if anyone becomes sick while at the facility they must be sent home as soon as possible.
- Keep sick children and staff separate from well children and staff until those sick can be sent home.
- Do not allow sick staff members to return to work until they have met the [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).

Have a plan if someone is or becomes sick.

- Isolate sick children in a separate “isolation” room or area (such as a cot in a corner of the classroom). Additional information can be found here: [isolation at home](#) and [isolation in healthcare settings](#).
- Follow CDC guidance on how to [disinfect your building or facility](#) if someone is sick.
- Clean and disinfect surfaces in the “isolation” room or area after the sick child has gone home.
- If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
 - Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before you clean or disinfect to allow respiratory droplets to settle before cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.

Address additional considerations if your childcare/day care program remains open during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Implement physical/[social distancing strategies](#).
- Intensify [cleaning and disinfection efforts](#).
- Modify [drop off and pick up procedures](#).
- Implement [screening procedures of staff and children up arrival](#)
- Maintain an adequate ratio of staff to children to ensure safety.
 - Plan ahead and ensure you have a roster of substitute caregivers who can fill in if your staff members are sick or stay home to care for sick family members.
- Staff members and older children should [wear face coverings](#) within the facility. Facial coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under age two.
- Individuals in high risk categories should speak with their health care provider to determine if they should remain present.
- HVAC adjustments for fresh air must be made if possible.

Implement Physical/Social Distancing Strategies

Work with local health officials to develop strategies appropriate for your community's situation.

Implement the following physical/social distancing strategies:

- Maintain childcare/daycare classes with the same group each day, and the same childcare/daycare providers. Consider creating a separate classroom or group for the children of healthcare workers and other first responders, if possible.
- Cancel or postpone special events such as festivals, holiday events, and special performances.
- Alter or halt daily group activities that may promote transmission.
- Stagger arrival and drop off times and/or have childcare/daycare providers be present outside the facility to pick up the children as they arrive. Curb side drop off and pick up should limit direct contact between parents and staff members and adhere to social/physical distancing recommendations.
- Arrange for administrative staff to telework from their homes when possible.

Apply Measures to Parent Drop-Off and Pick-Up

- Place hand hygiene stations at the entrance of the facility, so that children can clean their hands before they enter.
- Parents or designated caregivers should wear masks when dropping off and picking up.
- Stagger arrival and drop off times and plan to limit direct contact with parents when possible.
- Have the same parent or designated person drop off and pick up the child every day. Older people such as grandparents or those with serious underlying medical conditions should not pick up children, because they are more at risk for [severe illness from COVID-19](#).

Screen Children/Parents/Visitors and Other Persons Upon Arrival

- All persons including children, parents, staff, and others before entering the building. Refer to the HHSC document link above for all screening criteria.
- Do not admit persons who have a fever of 100⁰ (38.0⁰C) or above or other signs of illness to the facility.

Clean and Disinfect

Intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts:

- Develop a schedule for cleaning and disinfecting. An example can be found [here](#).
- [Clean, sanitize, and disinfect](#) surfaces and objects that are frequently touched, especially toys and games. This includes cleaning objects/surfaces not ordinarily cleaned daily such as doorknobs, light switches, classroom sink handles, countertops, nap pads, toilet training potties, desks, chairs, cubbies, and playground structures. Use the cleaners typically used at your facility. Guidance is available for the selection of appropriate [sanitizers or disinfectants](#) for child care settings.
- Follow the directions on the label of all cleaning products used. A list of products that are EPA-approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available [here](#) . If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Provide EPA-registered disposable wipes to childcare/daycare providers and other staff members so that commonly used surfaces such as keyboards, desks, and remote controls can be wiped down before use when possible. If wipes are not available, refer to CDC's guidance on [disinfection for community settings](#).
- Secure all cleaning materials out of reach of children.
- Do not use cleaning products near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children from inhaling toxic fumes.

Clean and Sanitize Toys

- Do not use toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized.
- Set aside toys that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretions or excretions until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves. Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize with an EPA-registered disinfectant, rinse again, and air-dry. You may also clean in a mechanical dishwasher.
- Use machine washable cloth toys with one individual at a time or do not use at all. These toys should be laundered before being used by another child.

Clean and Disinfect Bedding

- Use bedding (sheets, pillows, blankets, sleeping bags) that can be washed. Keep each child's bedding separate, and consider storing in individually labeled bins, cubbies, or bags.
- Cots and mats should be labeled for each child. Bedding that touches a child's skin should be cleaned weekly or before use by another child.

Wash, Feed, Hold, Change a Child

To the extent possible, when comforting, washing, feeding, or holding very young children the childcare/daycare provider should protect themselves by wearing an over-large button-down, long sleeved shirt and by wearing long hair up off the collar in a ponytail or other updo.

- Childcare/daycare providers should
 - Wash their hands, neck, and anywhere touched by a child's secretions.
 - Change the child's clothes if secretions are on the child's clothes.
 - Change their button-down shirt, if there are secretions on it, and wash their hands again.

- Wash their hands before and after handling infant bottles prepared at home or prepared in the facility.
- Only work with children within one room/area.
- Wear gloves when changing diapers, gloves must be changed between each child.
- Place contaminated clothes in a plastic bag or wash in a washing machine.
- Clean bottles, bottle caps, nipples, and other equipment used for bottle-feeding thoroughly after each use by washing in a dishwasher or by washing with a bottlebrush, soap, and water.
- Diaper changing procedures must be posted in all diaper changing area as outlined in HHSC guidelines.

Clean Hands: Healthy Behaviors for Children, Staff and Volunteers

- Engage in hand hygiene at the following times:
 - Arrival to the facility and after breaks;
 - Before and after preparing food or drinks;
 - Before and after eating or handling food, or feeding children;
 - Before and after administering medication or medical ointment;
 - Before and after diapering;
 - After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom;
 - After coming into contact with bodily fluid;
 - After handling animals or cleaning up animal waste;
 - After playing outdoors or in sand; and
 - After handling garbage.
- Posters describing handwashing procedures must be placed near sinks as outlined in HHSC guidelines.

Prepare Foods and Meals Safely

- Serve meals in classrooms instead of a cafeteria or group dining room. Plate each child's meal so that multiple children are not using the same serving utensils.
- Do not allow staff who diaper children to prepare food.
- Do not use sinks for food preparation if they are used for any other purpose.
- Ensure children wash hands prior to and immediately after eating.
- Have caregivers wash their hands before preparing food and after helping children to eat.
- Follow all other applicable federal, state, and local regulations and [guidance](#) related to safely prepare food.