

Guidance for California Child Care Providers

During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Updated 07/27/2022

The following guidelines provide information and procedures on how child care programs can safely care for children during the COVID-19 pandemic. This guidance does not supersede applicable federal, state, and local laws and policies for child care programs.

The everyday infection control practices of vaccination, staying home if sick and the daily health check, hand washing, healthy air, covering your coughs and sneezes, and cleaning and disinfecting all work together to reduce the risk of spreading many infectious diseases in child care programs. By using a layered approach, you can help prevent the spread of infectious diseases, such as influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), norovirus, and COVID-19.

Vaccination

Vaccination is the leading public health strategy to reduce the rate of serious illness, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19. Vaccination protects the individual getting vaccinated, their family, and their community. Staying up-to-date on vaccination protects people in the highest risk groups, including people with chronic health problems, those who work closely with others, people living in multi-generational households, and those who cannot be vaccinated. People 6 months and older can get a COVID-19 vaccine. Contact your local public health department or check with your health care provider or local pharmacies for information on where to get vaccinated and/or get a booster. Vaccine appointments are also available on [Myturn.ca.gov](https://myturn.ca.gov).

Stay Home if Sick and the Daily Health Check

Children and staff with symptoms of COVID-19 should stay home and test for COVID-19. For more information on staying home when sick with COVID-19, see the Centers for Disease Control page on [Quarantine and Isolation](#). Conduct a health check on each child, each day, before their parent leaves.

- Ask about symptoms of COVID-19.
- Consider the child's individual health status. For example, a child with a diagnosis of allergies from their health care provider does not need to stay home for allergy symptoms.
- If a child becomes sick during the day with signs of COVID-19, move them to an area away from other children, and notify their family to pick them up right away. Actively supervise the child who is sick, and wear a mask around anyone with COVID-19 symptoms.

Handwashing

Have children and staff wash their hands upon entering the facility and frequently during the day. Follow proper hand hygiene procedures. Display handwashing guidelines/posters for staff and children in bathrooms and near handwashing sinks. (See the CCHP poster [When to Wash Hands](#) based on the CFOC Standard 3.2.2.1 and the CCHP poster [Wash Your Hands Properly](#) based on the CFOC standard 3.2.2.2.) Use hand sanitizer (with 60% or more alcohol) when soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty. Keep hand sanitizer out of children's reach.

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Cover Your Cough and Sneeze

Teach children, reinforce, and model covering your [coughs and sneezes](#) to reduce the risk of getting and spreading infectious diseases.

Healthy Air

Provide fresh air indoors by safely opening windows and doors. Encourage outdoor play to maximize fresh air. Talk to your facilities manager or a ventilation consultant to learn about maintaining and/or servicing your heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system. Maintain your HVAC system, including changing filters, according to manufacturer's instructions. If you don't have an HVAC system or your HVAC system does not work properly, consider using a portable air filtering device with a HEPA filter.

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Clean surfaces regularly. Cleaning high touch surfaces and shared objects once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove germs that may be on surfaces. Using disinfectants on the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) List N, further reduces the risk of spreading infection during an outbreak in your child care program. Posters for child care providers on step-by-step cleaning and disinfecting can be found on the California Childcare Health Program (CCHP) website: [Step-by-Step Cleaning for Child Care Programs](#), [Step-by-Step Disinfecting for Child Care Programs](#), and [Reminders for Using Disinfectants](#) can be found on the Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) website.

ADDITIONAL STRATEGIES BASED ON COVID-19 COMMUNITY LEVELS:

In addition to the core infection control strategies above, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends adding more layers of strategies if the COVID-19 Community Level in your local area increases. Additional strategies include: wearing a face mask, screening testing, and small, stable groups (cohorts).

Community Levels can be low, medium, or high. The [CDC COVID-19 County Check](#) is a tool to help people decide if they need to layer more strategies based on the latest information about COVID-19. Levels are determined by looking at the rates of new COVID-19 cases and hospitalization in the area. When the COVID-19 Community Level is medium or high or if your program is experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak, you can add some additional prevention strategies to keep your program operating safely such as:

Wearing a Face Mask

The [Centers for Disease Control](#) recommends that adults and children age 2 years and older wear a face mask when Community Levels of COVID-19 are high. Even when the Community Level is medium or low, anyone who wants to wear a mask should be supported to do so. You may also consider layering masking when close contact occurs, like when feeding and diapering young children and infants. [Get the most out of masking](#) by wearing a mask with both good fit and good filtration. Children under 2 years old should not wear a face mask because of the danger of suffocation. Check with your [local public health department](#) for masking guidance in your county.

Screening Testing

Screening testing can be used to identify people infected with COVID-19 who do not have symptoms. You might routinely test staff or children when COVID-19 Community Levels are medium or high. Or you

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might test staff and children after returning from breaks (for example, holidays, spring break, at the beginning of the school year). Programs could also choose to test staff who care for children at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19, such as children with chronic health conditions or those who are immunocompromised.

At-home testing, on-site rapid testing, or laboratory testing can be used for screening. At-home kits for routine testing should be equally available to all families. Set up communication protocols for timely reporting of positive at-home test results. Be sure to have family consent for on-site testing and, as always, keep health information, including COVID-19 test results, confidential.

Small, Stable Groups (Cohorts)

Small, stable groups reduce the risk of spreading COVID-19 and protect staff and children by limiting the number of exposed people if someone becomes ill. Keep groups small and stable when Community Levels are high. Cohorts are especially helpful when masking is not possible such as in programs that serve infants and children with special needs who cannot safely wear masks.

Layer some or all of these strategies on top of your core practices as needed. Your local health officials can offer advice on which strategies to implement according to the local needs and resources. As we learn to live with the virus and its variants, your attention to the overall health and well-being of staff, children, and families in your program is appreciated.