

Guidance for Childcare Providers

Background

SARS-CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus that has emerged and caused coronavirus disease (abbreviated as COVID-19). Public health experts continue to learn about SARS-CoV-2, but based on current data and similar coronaviruses, spread from person-to-person happens most frequently among close contacts (those within about six feet) via respiratory droplets. Transmission of SAR-CoV-2 to persons from surfaces contaminated with the virus has not been documented yet, but current evidence suggests that SARS-CoV-2 may remain viable for hours to days on surfaces made from a variety of material.

Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date.

Purpose

On March 25, 2020, Governor Brad Little issued an Order to Self-Isolate (i.e., “stay-home order”) that mandates travel, gathering, and business restrictions for all of Idaho. Because childcare is essential to our community, all childcare businesses are exempt from the restrictions in the order. They are not required to close. The order is in effect until April 15, 2020 and is subject to be modified or extended. This guidance provides recommendations for childcare facilities that remain open for the purpose of serving Idaho’s children. This document can also be used by the administrators of temporary child care programs that operate for no more than twelve (12) weeks during a calendar year, or not more than once a week (day/summer camps). The goal is to minimize the possibility of spreading the virus in the childcare setting.

Definitions

COVID-19 is caused by a new virus. There is much to learn about the [transmissibility, severity, and other features of the disease](#). Everyone can do their part to help plan, prepare, and respond to this emerging public health threat.

Recommended Actions

Childcare administrators can take important steps to help prevent and prepare for cases of COVID-19 in the childcare setting, including:

- Establish effective communication plans to stay in regular communication with all parents, children, and staff. Your plan should ensure that all of your communications are culturally and linguistically sensible and accessible for children and families you serve.
- Inform all parents and staff about steps everyone can take to prevent exposure and further spread. Update your facility’s preparedness plans.
- Inform parents and staff about updates and/or changes to your policies or operations.

- Modify drop-off and pick-up procedures. Consider staggering arrival and drop off times and/or have childcare providers come outside the facility to pick up the children as they arrive.
- Ask parents to check their children's temperature and ask staff to check their own temperature daily before coming to childcare. If the parent thinks the child is sick, you should encourage them to call their healthcare provider.
- Establish an illness policy for children and staff at your facility if you do not already have one. Encourage parents and staff to strictly follow your facility's illness policy and stay home when sick.
- Establish a daily process for identifying and sending home children and staff who become sick. If children and staff are exhibiting any concerning symptoms you should use your illness policy to determine if they should attend childcare.
- Separate sick infants, children, and staff from others until they can go home. When feasible, identify a "sick room" through which others do not regularly pass. Provide cloth face coverings for sick staff members and children 2 years and older.
- Limit group sizes as much as possible and choose activities that encourage more physical space between children. If possible, childcare classes should include the same group each day, and the same childcare providers should remain with the same group each day.
- Daily activities and curriculum should support social distancing, striving to maintain at least 6 feet between children. For example:
 - Eliminate large group activities
 - Limit the number of children in each program space
 - Increase distance between children during table work
 - Plan activities that do not require close physical contact between multiple children
 - Limit item sharing. If items must be shared, remind children to wash their hands or not to touch their faces after using these items
 - Discontinue the use of water or sensory tables
 - Minimize time standing in lines and take steps to ensure that distance between the children is maintained
 - Incorporate additional outside time and open windows frequently
- Provide outdoor activities when possible, with no more than one group of children in one outside area at a time. Note that if your outdoor area is enclosed/not accessible to the public, you can use the outdoor play equipment but it should be wiped down between groups of children if possible.
- Stagger meal times or provide meals in the classroom when possible. Eliminate family-style meals and follow social distancing during mealtimes. Provide bagged or individual lunches.
- Increase the frequency of cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting your childcare facility. Chlorine-based sanitizers are known to be most effective against viruses and bacteria. Make sure to strictly follow manufacturer's instructions.
- Staff are encouraged to implement cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting practices of the following areas:
 - Door handles, crash bars, doorknobs
 - Light switches
 - Entry windows
 - Office counters and surfaces, classrooms furniture
 - Handrails
 - Sinks and drinking fountains
 - Dispensers

- Bathrooms
- Anything else that is handled frequently by multiple children and staff

Note: Consider removing materials from the classroom that are harder to clean (e.g. soft toys and porous materials). A list of recommended EPA registered disinfectants to use can be found here:

<https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>

- Teach children and staff to wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer (60% alcohol). Encourage hand washing by children and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and the provision of adequate supplies.
- Use "respiratory etiquette." Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue. See [CDC's Cover Your Cough page](#) for more information.
- CDC recommends that all children 2 years and older should wear a [cloth face covering](#) over their nose and mouth when in the community setting. This is an additional public health measure people should take to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in addition to (not instead of) social distancing, frequent hand cleaning and other [everyday preventive actions](#). A cloth face covering is not intended to protect the wearer, but may prevent the spread of virus from the wearer to others. This would be especially important in the event that someone is infected but does not have symptoms. Please remember that cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation.
- Provide adequate supplies within easy reach, including tissues and no-touch trashcans.
- Post signs. Signs should be highly visible and remind staff, visitors, and students to perform hand hygiene, sneeze/cough into their elbow, put used tissue in a waste receptacle, and to wash hands immediately after using tissue. Recommend everyone to avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes.

Child or Employee Being Tested for COVID-19 or Has Symptoms but is not Tested

- Any child or employee being tested for COVID-19 should not be in the facility and should be isolated at home while waiting for test results.
- If the test result is negative or testing was not done, the child or employee should stay home until fever has been gone for 3 days and symptoms improve.

Employee with Lab-Confirmed COVID-19

Dismiss children and most staff for 2-5 days. This initial short-term dismissal will allow your local health district to have time to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting your facility and for custodial staff to clean and disinfect the affected areas. Work with the local health district to determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended closure is needed to stop or slow further spread of the virus.

Notification: When an employee notifies you of a positive COVID-19 test and the employee is not already isolated at home, they must be sent home immediately. Advise the employee to stay in isolation. Ask the employee which coworkers and children they have been in close contact with starting two days before the onset of symptoms. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) defines *close contact* as "a person that has been within 6 feet of the infected employee for a prolonged period of time (at least

10 minutes)". Central District Health (CHD) will contact you to obtain this information for the purpose of determining those at highest-risk. Not every employee will be contacted (only those at highest risk). CDH will also follow up with the person confirmed to have COVID-19 to advise of next steps. If a modified drop-off and pick-up procedures were implemented at your facility, parents will not fall in the category of "close contact" and, therefore, are a low-risk.

Consider alerting your staff and parents of exposed children as soon as possible, but remember to keep it confidential as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Your message should include:

- Possible dates of exposure
- Reminder to employees and parents that there is current community spread of COVID-19. Advise them to watch for signs and symptoms which develop within 2 – 14 days from possible exposure
- Remind employees and parents how to best protect themselves from COVID-19 and the importance of staying home if they are sick
- Let your employees and parents know what your establishment is doing as a result of exposure (e.g. closing, cleaning, etc.)
- Remind your employees and parents of the establishment's illness policy
- Where to find reputable sources and information for COVID-19 (CDC, local health department, www.coronavirus.idaho.gov)

Cleaning: It is recommended to close off areas used by the ill employee or child and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection. The CDC offers guidance on how best to clean an area in which an infected person was present. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

Child with Lab-Confirmed COVID-19

Dismiss children and most staff for 2-5 days. This initial short-term dismissal will allow your local health district to have time to gain a better understanding of the COVID-19 situation impacting your facility and for custodial staff to clean and disinfect the affected areas. Work with the local health district to determine appropriate next steps, including whether an extended closure is needed to stop or slow further spread of the virus.

Notification: When a parent notifies you of a positive COVID-19 test in their child, if the child is not already isolated at home, they must be sent home immediately. Central District Health (CDH) will work with you to determine those at highest-risk. Not every employee or child (child's parent in this case) will be contacted, only those at highest risk. CDH will also follow up with the parent to advise of next steps. If a modified drop-off and pick-up procedures were implemented at your facility, other parents will not fall in the category of "close contact" and, therefore, will be at low-risk.

Consider alerting your staff and parents of exposed children as soon as possible, but remember to keep it confidential as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Your message should include:

- Possible dates of exposure
- Reminder to employees and parents that there is current community spread of COVID-19. Advise them to watch for signs and symptoms which develop within 2 – 14 days from possible exposure

- Remind employees and parents how to best protect themselves from COVID-19 and the importance of staying home if they are sick
- Let your employees and parents know what your establishment is doing as a result of exposure (e.g. closing, cleaning, etc.)
- Remind your employees and parents of the establishment's illness policy
- Where to find reputable sources and information for COVID-19 (CDC, local health department, www.coronavirus.idaho.gov)

Cleaning: It is recommended to close off areas used by the ill employee or child and wait as long as practical before beginning cleaning and disinfection to minimize potential for exposure to respiratory droplets. Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area. If possible, wait up to 24 hours before beginning cleaning and disinfection. The CDC offers guidance on how best to clean an area in which an infected person was present. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

People with COVID-19 who have stayed home (home isolated) can stop home isolation under the following conditions:

People will not have a test to determine if they are still contagious. They will be cleared to return to work after these three things have happened:

- They have had no fever for at least 72 hours (that is three full days of no fever without the use of medicine that reduces fevers)

AND

- other symptoms have improved (for example, when their cough or shortness of breath have improved)

AND

- at least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared

Potential Exposure to Lab-Confirmed COVID-19

If you or an employee at your facility think you or they have been exposed to someone with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19, follow the steps below to monitor your health and avoid spreading the disease to others if you get sick.

You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes, or
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

- ✓ People who have been in close contact with a person who is sick from COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days since the last day of contact with the infected individual and monitor their health.
- ✓ If you have not been in close contact with a sick person with COVID-19, you should monitor your health for 14 days since the last day of contact with the infected individual. Your risk of becoming ill is lower than for someone who has had close contact.

- ✓ If you get sick with fever, cough or shortness of breath (even if your symptoms are very mild), contact your healthcare provider. They will evaluate your symptoms, determine if you need to be tested for COVID-19, and instruct you on care, self-observation and/or isolation.

Reporting COVID-19 Exposures and Confirmed Cases Associated with Your Facility

Per Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) guidance, you should report if you have staff or families exposed or determined to be infected with COVID-19. Please call 211 (1-800-926-2588) for all reporting needs. Please keep in mind that childcare facilities are required to report if you or anyone living in your home or working in your facility has a communicable disease that might pose a threat to the safety of a child.

Childcare providers should contact IDHW licensing staff to notify them of a proposed change in business practices and/or seek guidance to a proposed change in response to COVID-19. Child Care Program and State Licensing policy staff may be reached by calling 211 (1-800-926-2588).

Anyone considering creating childcare specifically to serve working families, should call 2-1-1 (1-800-926-2588) and ask to speak to the Child Care Licensing Program Specialist or ICCP Program Specialist. These IDHW staff members will be working in coordination with providers, public health districts, and local officials to ensure access to childcare while maintaining health and safety for children.

Resources:

- CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Print Resources:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/communication/factsheets.html>
- CDC Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations:
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- CDC When and How to Wash Your Hands
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
- State of Idaho Official Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Website:
 - <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>
- Central District Health COVID-19 Websites:
 - <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus> [and https://www.cdh.idahog.gov/dac-resources](https://www.cdh.idahog.gov/dac-resources)

CDH (Central District Health) Call Center: (208-321-2222 M-F 8:30-4:30)

Sources:

CDC, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/index.html>