



CHECKLIST FOR CHILD CARE CENTERS

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For purposes of this checklist, "child care center" refers to both regulated child care centers, temporary licensed child care centers, home providers, and youth development organizations.

The virus that causes COVID-19 can infect people of all ages. While the risk of serious illness or loss of life is greatest in those 65 years of age and older, persons in every age group can get COVID-19 and some will have a severe illness.

We should all be thankful that, with rare exceptions, COVID-19 is not claiming the lives of our children. However, we can never forget that a child with a mild or even asymptomatic case of COVID-19 can spread that infection to others who may be far more vulnerable.

COVID-19 is spread from person to person through contact that is close enough to share droplets generated by coughing, sneezing, speaking and even just breathing. COVID-19 can also be spread by touching objects where contaminated droplets have landed. Because of this easy manner of transmission, an infant, child or young person who is infected with COVID-19 can spread the infection to others they come in close contact with, such as members of their household, teachers, or other caregivers. We have learned that infected persons with mild or even no symptoms can spread COVID-19.

These facts are vitally important when considering the reopening of schools, daycares, youth camps and other places that provide care and education for our children.

One thing is for certain: education and childcare are essential and we must find reasonably safe ways to restore these services so that our children can be cared for, educated and their parents and guardians can return to work. We must find ways to protect our children from COVID-19 and ensure that they do not bring the infection to others, such as other household members, who may be at high risk for severe infection or even loss of life.

For adults in the workplace or other public spaces, we are confident that if certain measures such as cloth face coverings or non-medical grade masks, respiratory etiquette, frequent hand washing / hand sanitation and environmental cleaning and sanitizing are widely observed, we can then proceed with reopening Texas in a safe and measured way.

However, some of the protective measures that we can expect from adults, such as wearing cloth face coverings and maintaining distance from one another, are, for a variety of reasons, simply not possible for infants, children and youth to practice in schools, daycares and youth camps. In some cases, the child will be too young to understand and practice these precautions. We cannot, for example, expect a group of toddlers or schoolchildren not to engage in interactive play or share toys, for example.

All of these factors mean that while certain precautions against the spread of COVID-19 can and will be applied to schools, daycares and youth camps, the infection control measures that can be put in place in these settings will differ somewhat from those that are suitable for other social, business and commercial settings.

Therefore, every child care provider who is responsible for providing care or education for infants, children and youth in these settings must be aware of these facts and be willing to comply with the infection control measures that will be in place in these settings. Parents or guardians should monitor the health of their child and not send them to the program if they are displaying any symptom of COVID. Parents or guardians should seek COVID testing promptly and report results to the program given the implications for other children, families, and staff. Individuals aged 65 or older are at a higher risk of COVID-19. Parents or guardians should protect any vulnerable persons who are members of the same household or come into frequent, close contact with infants, children and youth who attend daycare.



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About minimum health protocols:

All individuals age 10 or older must wear a face covering (over the nose and mouth) wherever it is not feasible to maintain six feet of social distancing from another individual not in the same household.

The following are the minimum recommended health protocols for all child care centers choosing to operate in Texas. Child care centers may adopt additional protocols consistent with their specific needs and circumstances to help protect the health and safety of all employees and children.

The virus that causes COVID-19 can be spread to others by infected persons who have few or no symptoms. Even if an infected person is only mildly ill, the people they spread it to may become seriously ill or even die, especially if that person is 65 or older with pre-existing health conditions that place them at higher risk. Because of the hidden nature of this threat, everyone should rigorously follow the practices specified in these protocols, all of which facilitate a safe and measured reopening of Texas. The virus that causes COVID-19 is still circulating in our communities. We should continue to observe practices that protect everyone, including those who are most vulnerable.

Please note, public health guidance cannot anticipate every unique situation. Child care centers should stay informed and take additional actions based on common sense and wise judgment that will protect health and support economic revitalization. Child care centers should also be mindful of federal and state employment and disability laws, workplace safety standards, and accessibility standards to address the needs of both workers and customers. Federal and state regulations regarding child care centers should be followed.

Federal and state health protocols for serving children in child care:

- Operate the child care in accordance with the *Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open* released by the Centers of Disease Control, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>.
- Based on above CDC guidance, create plans for each child care facility around the following prevention measures:
 - Implement social distancing strategies
 - Intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts
 - Modify drop-off and pick-up procedures
 - Implement screening procedures upon arrival
- Operate the child care in accordance with applicable state rules, including Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) emergency rules applicable to the type of license the child care center holds.
 - Temporarily licensed child care centers can find their rules here.
 - Regulated child care centers can find their rules here.
- Ensure that all child care providers have taken required health and safety training related to COVID-19 through the Texas A&M AgrilLife extension. The following training is required:
 - Providing High Quality Experiences during COVID-19 for Emergency Child Care Settings
 - Special Considerations for Infection Control during COVID-19



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Vulnerable/high risk groups:

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, people 65 or older might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19. To protect those at higher risk, it is important that everyone practices healthy hygiene behaviors.

If you have staff members or teachers age 65 or older, encourage them to talk to their healthcare provider to assess their risk and to determine if they should stay home.

Information about COVID-19 in children is somewhat limited, but the information that is available suggests that many children have mild symptoms. However, a small percentage of children have been reported to have severe illness. Please consult with your health care provider on what is appropriate for your child.

Preventative health measures for child care centers:

Child care providers must follow all applicable state statutes and HHSC Child Care Licensing rules. The following checklist is intended to provide a selection of important health and safety items. It is not intended to be an exhaustive list. Providers who need help understanding applicable rules and procedures should reach out to their contact at Child Care Licensing for further assistance.

Plan ahead to ensure adequate supplies to support hand hygiene behaviors and routine cleaning of objects and surfaces. If you have difficulty in obtaining these supplies, please contact your Child Care Licensing representative.

- Require sick children and staff to stay home.**
 - Communicate to parents the importance of keeping children home when they are sick.
 - Communicate to staff the importance of being vigilant for symptoms and staying in touch with center management if or when they start to feel sick.
 - Establish procedures to ensure children and staff who come to the child care center sick or become sick while at your facility are sent home as soon as possible.
 - Keep sick children and staff separate from well children and staff until they can be sent home.
 - Sick staff members should not return to work until they have met the criteria to discontinue home isolation.
 - Consider ways to provide this guidance to your child care center families.
- Have a plan if someone is or becomes sick.**
 - Plan to have an isolation room that can be used to isolate a sick child.
 - Be ready to follow CDC guidance on how to disinfect your building or center if someone is sick.
 - If a sick child has been isolated in your facility, clean and disinfect surfaces in your isolation room or area after the sick child has gone home.



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- If COVID-19 is confirmed in a child or staff member:**
 - Contact your local health authority to report the presence of COVID-19 in your facility. Your local health authority will advise you on re-opening procedures.
 - Contact Child Care Licensing to report the presence of COVID-19 in your facility.
 - 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.
 - If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism among your staff.**
 - Develop plans to cover classes in the event of increased staff absences. Coordinate with other local child care programs and reach out to substitutes to determine their anticipated availability if regular staff members need to stay home if they or their family members are sick.
 - Recommend that individuals at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 consult with their medical provider to assess their risk and to determine if they should stay home if there is an outbreak in their community.
- Review plans for implementing social distancing strategies.**
 - Social distancing focuses on remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance from others when possible. Detailed guidance for implementing social distancing strategies in child care centers and schools is found [here](#).
- Assess group gatherings and events.**
 - Events and group activities are strongly discouraged in child care centers. If for some reason an event must occur, child care centers should follow current [CDC guidance](#) about gatherings and events.
 - Avoid scheduling events that require your children to bring items from home (e.g. show and tells).
- Limit access to your center.**
 - Prohibit any but the following individuals from accessing your facility:
 - Operation staff;
 - Persons with legal authority to enter, including law enforcement officers, Texas Rising Star staff, Licensing staff, and Department of Family and Protective Services staff;
 - Professionals providing services to children;
 - Children enrolled at the operation; and
 - Parents who have children enrolled and present at the operation. Parents should only enter the child care center when necessary.
 - Limit the use of parent or other volunteers in your facilities to an absolute minimum.