

COVID-19 Preparedness Plan for Licensed and Certified Child Care Programs Deemed Critical Businesses during Peacetime Emergency

All critical businesses in Minnesota are required to have a COVID-19 preparedness plan that protects staff, children, families and the community you serve. This template is designed to help you create a plan and recognizes the health and safety requirements already required of your program. This template is designed to assist you in meeting the unique needs of your staff and children in care during this peacetime emergency.

According to Executive Order 20-48, critical business, including providers licensed and certified to provide child care services, are required to follow guidance from the [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. MDH encourages providers to follow the [CDC Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#). Updated guidance and helpful tools can be found on mn.gov/childcare. Because there is currently no vaccine for this virus, you will need to operate your program for many months with the possibility that COVID-19 could be confirmed in your program. The MDH/CDC guidance is designed to prevent, and mitigate, or respond to the transmission of COVID-19 in your program setting.

[Executive Order 20-74](#), signed by Gov. Walz on June 5, 2020, requires all critical businesses to develop and implement a COVID-19 Preparedness Plan that outlines how you will implement MDH and CDC guidelines. In order to help you comply, DHS is providing this “Child Care COVID-19 Preparedness Plan” (“Plan”) as a resource for you to use in creating a plan, if you do not already have one. This template should be used with the [checklist guidelines for creating a child care COVID-19 Preparedness Plan](#). The use of this particular form is optional. You may create a Plan using your own form but your Plan must address, at a minimum, the eleven topics identified below.

We know that child care providers care about the health and safety of their children in their care, particularly during this pandemic. That’s why the guidance from MDH and CDC is so important for providers to know about – it provides specific steps you can take to continue to keep everyone safe while operating during this unique public health crisis. The guidance from MDH and CDC includes strategies, such as social distancing, limiting group sizes, hygiene and cleaning practices, screening and exclusion criteria.

Your COVID-19 Preparedness Plan must describe how your program will implement, at a minimum, the following components, in compliance with MDH and CDC guidelines for child care programs:

1. frequent handwashing;
2. cleaning and disinfecting;
3. arrival and departure;
4. social distancing throughout the day;
5. plans for identifying and excluding sick staff, volunteers and children;
6. source control and cloth face coverings;

7. workplace ventilation
8. playground use
9. meals and snacks;
10. field trips and events, and
11. communication and training about the Plan.

You must develop your Plan by June 29, 2020. Providers need to evaluate, monitor, and update their plans if necessary, on a regular basis. The Plan needs to be posted at all of the business’s workplaces in readily accessible locations that will allow for the Plan to be readily reviewed by all workers.

You do **not** need to send the completed plan to your DHS (or county) licenser for review or approval.

However, you will need to:

- notify enrolled families about the plan and make it available to them upon request;
- train staff, substitutes and volunteers on the plan and ensure they are capable of implementing it, and
- post the plan in a prominent place or make it accessible to staff and volunteers who need to review it.

1. Frequent Handwashing

- Reinforce handwashing routines, especially upon arrival, after having been in a public place or after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Ensure children are supervised when using hand sanitizer and that it is inaccessible to them when not in use.
- CDC guidance on handwashing can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#HandHygiene>

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR HANDWASHING:

- Staff and students will wash hands upon arrival, and frequently throughout the day, including but not limited to – before snack and meals, after using the bathroom, after playing outside/on the playground, and after coughing or sneezing.
- Students will be taught proper handwashing procedures the first week of school, that will be reinforced frequently throughout the school year

2. Cleaning and disinfecting

- Protocols related to cleaning and disinfection of programs should be detailed so that staff know what is expected of them. Follow MDH and CDC guidance for frequent cleaning and disinfecting of your program:
 - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/clean.pdf>
 - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>
- Ensure high-touch surfaces such as doorknobs, light switches, stair rails, counters, tables and chairs, shared toys, program equipment and other items are regularly cleaned and disinfected.
- Minimize the use of shared supplies (e.g. arts and crafts, office supplies) that cannot be sanitized and consider using designated bins for clean and used items.

- Establish procedures for cleaning and disinfection after persons suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 have been in the program.

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR CLEANING AND DISINFECTING:

- High touch surfaces such as door knobs, light switches, tables, etc. are cleaned with soap and water, and disinfected with a diluted bleach solution at least daily.
- Shared toys that can be cleaned/disinfected in the dishwasher are cleaned daily
- Shared toys that can be laundered, such as dress up clothes, doll blankets, etc. will be washed at least weekly or as needed
- Shared supplies that cannot easily be cleaned will be removed from the classroom or sprayed with a diluted bleach solution daily or rotated with other materials so they can sit for 72 hours
- If a person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 has been in the program, we will follow cleaning procedures outlined in the *COVID-19 Cleaning and Disinfecting Guidance for Schools and Childcare Programs* document created by MDH

3. Arrival and Departure

- Whenever possible, pick-up and drop-off should occur outside and/or limit the extent to which parents enter the program and interact with each other.
- Consider use of multiple entrances and exits when these can be used safely by the staff, volunteers and visitors.
- Before children enter the space, screen them to ensure those with symptoms are not attending.
 - Screening process for children: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren>

DESCRIBE FOR ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE:

- Before entering the building, a staff member will screen each child. This will include taking the child’s temperature, asking the adult dropping off if the child has been coughing or experiencing shortness of breath, and doing a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, or extreme fussiness.
- Signs will be posted on doors and within the building reminding families of social distancing protocols and asking them not to linger/socialize within the building. We will be limiting the number of families dropping off in the building at one time.

4. Plans for sick children, staff, and volunteers

- Conduct daily health checks. This includes screening for children, staff, volunteers, and household members for family child care programs to ensure those who exhibit any symptoms of illness are not present.
- Follow exclusion guidance and ensure children, staff, and volunteers stay home when sick: <http://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>

- Use CDC guidance to develop a plan for what you will do if someone becomes sick with COVID-like symptoms: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#General>
- If a child, staff member, or volunteer is diagnosed with COVID-19 or if you have questions about a child, staff member, or volunteer who is exhibiting symptoms, reach out to MDH at health.schools.covid19@state.mn.us and follow their direction.
- Using the MDH and CDC resources above, create a communication plan for how and when you will notify parents, staff, and volunteers if a child, staff member, volunteer or household member for family child care programs has been exposed, is exhibiting symptoms, or has tested positive.
 - Contact MDH if you have questions (at the email address above)
 - Ensure the parent or guardian contact information in each child’s record is up-to-date.

DESCRIBE PLANS FOR SICK CHILDREN, STAFF, AND VOLUNTEERS:

- Daily health screenings will be done on arrival for all staff and students as described above.
- Sick children and staff will be excluded from the program as outlined in our handbook. For those with COVID-19 symptoms, we will utilize the *Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Childcare Programs* document from MDH
- If a child, staff member, or volunteer is diagnosed with or has been exposed to COVID-19, we will consult our school’s registered nurse for resources on what to send to families.
- The nurse’s office will be used for an isolation room if a child becomes sick at the center. Staff and volunteers will be sent home immediately if they become sick during the day.
- [We will follow CDC guidelines for cleaning and disinfecting spaces used by someone with Covid-19](#)

5. Social distancing throughout the day

- Limit group sizes as much as possible and create consistent groups of children and providers, staff, or volunteers who stay together throughout the day.
- Add visual cues or barriers to direct traffic flow and distancing. For example, you may want to tape “Xs” on the floor to let children know where they should sit to promote social distancing.
- At nap time, ensure that children’s naptime mats (or cribs) are spaced out as much as possible. Consider placing children head to toe in order to further reduce the potential for viral spread.

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR SOCIAL DISTANCING THROUGHOUT THE DAY:

- Group sizes will be limited, and different groups of students will not be mixed throughout the day.
- Playground times will be staggered to allow more social distancing
- Visual cues will be placed on the floor for circle time and near the door so children know where to sit/line up to maintain social distancing.
- Cots will be spread out during rest time
- Teachers will teach and encourage students keeping their hands to themselves

6. Source control and cloth face coverings

- Cloth face coverings are an important piece for mitigating the spread of the virus but are most effective if it can stay in place without being pulled on or touched by the person wearing it or others. Within this context, the provider, staff members, and volunteers are encouraged to wear cloth face coverings during the work day as much as possible, recognizing the development needs of the children in their care.
- Children should not wear cloth face coverings unless they can reliably wear, remove, and handle the cloth face covering throughout the day. Cloth face coverings should NOT be put on infants or children younger than 2 because of the danger of suffocation.
- Face covering guidance is available here:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/masks.html#child>
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/diy-cloth-face-coverings.html>

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR SOURCE CONTROL AND CLOTH FACE COVERINGS:

- Any person aged 6 and older are required to wear a face mask or cloth face covering when in the building.
- Staff is required to wear a face mask or cloth face covering in all public areas of the building. They may wear a face shield in their classroom when teaching if it is necessary for children to see their face.
- Students will not be required to wear face coverings. If a parent chooses to send their child with a face covering, they must be able to manage it independently. They need to be able to wear it the entire time they are at school without frequently touching/adjusting it, take it on/off independently when appropriate and have an extra on hand.

7. Workplace ventilation

- Recognizing this may be difficult in center or school buildings, where possible work to maximize the amount of fresh air being brought in, limit air recirculation and make sure ventilation systems are being properly used and maintained. Take steps to minimize air flow blowing across people. It could mean keeping windows open where possible, removing or repositioning fans, and encouraging outdoor time.

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR VENTILATION AND AIR FLOW, IF POSSIBLE:

- Our program always encourages time outdoors weather permitting.

8. Playground use

- Stagger playground use rather than allowing big groups to play together.
- Wash hands before and after touching play structures. If possible, consider cleaning high touch areas of the play structure between groups.
- If you choose to bring children in your care to a public playground, be careful to ensure children wash hands after touching play structures and maintain six feet of space from other children as much as possible. <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/playground.pdf>

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR MITIGATING COVID-19 IN PLAYGROUND USE:

- Playground time will be staggered so that children in different classrooms are not out at the same time.
- Outdoor toys; such as shovels, buckets, and balls, will be limited and washed between each group of children.
- Children will wash hands before and after outdoor play.

9. Meals and snacks

- If meals are typically served family-style, plate each meal and serve it so that multiple children are not using the same serving utensils.
- To the extent possible, serve meals in individual classrooms. If using a cafeteria, the meal should be served to one small group of children at a time, with cleaning and sanitizing occurring in between groupings.

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR MITIGATING COVID-19 DURING MEALS AND SNACK TIMES:

- Snacks are prepared and served by the teachers in the classroom, so students are not sharing serving utensils.
- Lunches are packed at home. While eating, children are spread out to prevent spread of illness.
- Tables are cleaned and disinfected before and after being used for snacks/meals

10. Field trips and events

- Do not plan large group activities, such as field trips and family events. Consider changing field trips and events to a virtual format where appropriate.
- If you have an in-house field trip, screen the presenter. It would be best if in-house field trips are held outside in small group settings. Remember that social distance needs to be maintained, groups should not be mixed, and whenever possible, cleaning and sanitizing should occur between groups.

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR MITIGATING COVID-19 DURING FIELD TRIPS AND EVENTS:

- Field trips and large group activities are suspended until further notice.
- When appropriate, events will be held in a digital format.

11. Communications and training

- The plan must be available to the Commissioner and offered to families. Be sure to communicate to families, using plain language, the expectations for parents and children in implementing this plan (e.g. outdoor pick-up/drop-off protocols).
- The plan must be posted in a prominent place and readily accessible to all of your employees, adult caregivers, substitutes, and volunteers who need to review it. Provide training to ensure everyone is following your plan. Keep these individuals updated on any changes to the plan.

- Staff with concerns about their employer’s COVID-19 Preparedness Plan or questions about their rights should contact MNOSHA Compliance at osha.compliance@state.mn.us, 651-284-5050 or 877-470-6742.

DESCRIBE PLAN FOR COMMUNICATIONS AND TRAINING:

- The plan will be sent to families in communications regarding the first day of school. Exclusion guidelines and drop off/pick up protocol will be included in the preschool handbook.
- Important procedures will be highlighted in a preschool orientation, sent to all families before the first day of school
- The plan will be posted outside of the director’s office to be readily accessible to all.
- Staff will be trained on the plan in the August teacher workshop, and will regularly review it if changes are made.