



Updated COVID-19 Guidelines for Child Care Programs

February 25, 2022

This document provides updated guidelines for child care centers and family day homes. This document supersedes previous guidelines issued on February 7, 2022 by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE). This document reflects updated guidance based on recent events and the decreasing number of COVID-19 cases in Virginia.

These guidelines provide discretion so programs can work closely with parents to implement practices that best meet the needs of individual programs and their families. Guidelines are not mandatory, and are not subject to enforcement by the Office of Child Care Health and Safety. The VDOE will continue to inspect regulated and licensed programs for health and safety requirements based on the [Code of Virginia](#) and in [regulation](#) (8VAC20-770 through 8VAC20-850, as appropriate).

Child care programs are encouraged to practice multiple prevention strategies and remain vigilant about changing conditions. The benefit of mitigation efforts must always be weighed against the cost to children's overall well-being. Here are key prevention strategies that child care programs in Virginia should consider:

1. Vaccinations

- Vaccines are safe, effective and widely available. All child care staff are encouraged to get vaccinated, especially since children less than 5 years of age are not yet eligible to be vaccinated. Visit <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/covid-19-vaccine/>.

2. Staying Home When Sick

- Instruct any children, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19 to stay home and see a healthcare provider.
- If a child becomes sick while in care, arrange for the child to be picked up, while the child waits in a separate isolation room/area.

3. Face Masks

- On January 15, 2022, Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order Number Two (2022) and Order of Public Health Emergency One that rescinded a previous executive order and health order requiring masking of children in public and private school settings.
- On February 16, 2022, Governor Youngkin signed into law [SB739](#) which provides parents the right to opt-out of local school mask mandates on school property. The law also indicates that families do NOT have to provide a reason for opting out and students may NOT face consequences for not wearing masks. All school divisions in Virginia must comply by March 1, 2022.



- The rationale for these actions would be applicable in the child care setting. Programs are therefore strongly encouraged to allow families to make choices about masking that best meet the needs of their children.
- Parents should consult with their medical providers if they have questions about whether or not their child, if ages two or older, should mask and for how long; this is especially true if a child is at increased risk of severe illness from COVID-19, or lives with individuals at higher risk for severe illness. When a child is returning from isolation due to COVID-19, or was subject to a close contact exposure, the benefit of temporary masking is likely to outweigh the risks. See the [flow chart](#) for more information about how the decision to wear a mask impacts the length of time a student must isolate or quarantine after illness or exposure. Programs that accepted federal relief funding should follow CDC guidance to the extent practicable and when parents have NOT requested to opt-out of masking.
- As relates to staff, providers should continue to refer to the [Virginia Department of Labor and Industry \(DOLI\)](#) standards and updates.
- Face masks should NEVER be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation. Face masks are NOT recommended for any child who is eating, drinking, sleeping, has trouble breathing, or is unable to remove without assistance.

Programs should contact their assigned licensing inspector or the [Office of Child Care Health and Safety](#) in their region with questions.