

Interim Guidance: Considerations for Childcare Programs & K-12 Schools, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

March 8, 2020

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention developed guidance for administrators of public and private childcare programs and K-12 schools in the United States. This guidance aims to help partners understand how to prevent transmission of COVID-19 within their respective facilities and provides planning considerations in the event of widespread community transmission of COVID-19. Creating a plan for your program or school can help protect you, your employees, your students, and the health of the local community. The full text of this guidance can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>.

The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) strongly encourages administrators of childcare programs and schools to prepare for the possibility of outbreaks in their community. In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control, VDH has outlined action steps to be taken: prior to COVID-19 detection in your community, during a COVID-19 event in your community, and after the COVID-19 event in your community subsides. During a COVID-19 event, VDH will assess and categorize COVID-19 severity using measures including the number of cases reported, case-hospitalization ratio and number of localities affected.

In consultation with local health officials, administrators of childcare programs and schools should consider the following intervention strategies based on COVID-19 severity status in Virginia. Administrators of childcare programs and schools should take into consideration their ability to implement modifications to their normal operations for moderate and high severity level situations.

Help reduce stigma in your school and community by regularly and proactively communicating with faculty, staff, parents, students and others you serve that there is no connection between COVID-19 and race, ethnicity, or national origin.

The guidance below is structured in three sections: **prior** to COVID-19 detection in your community, **once** COVID-19 is detected in your community, and **after** COVID-19 event in your community.



PRIOR to COVID-19 Detection in your community

- Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs).
- Develop information-sharing systems with partners.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who are sick at school or school-related events.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning.
- Create communications plans for use with the school community.
- Review CDC's guidance for businesses and employers.
- Share resources with students, their families and staff.
- Promote messages that encourage staff and students who are sick to stay home.
- Update and distribute timely and accurate prevention information.
- Provide additional hand hygiene supplies, as well as, tissues throughout school buildings.
- Maintain masks onsite in case someone becomes ill.
- Identify a space that can be used to isolate staff or students who become ill.



ONCE COVID-19 IS DETECTED in the community (low to high severity)

Once COVID-19 is detected in a community, health department recommendations addressing any change in normal operations will depend on a number of factors such as the number of cases detected, the severity of illness associated with those cases and how widespread infection is or is predicted to be based on case histories. Assessing these and other factors will help the health department determine the severity of the situation, which will help inform recommendations. In consultation with local officials, childcare programs and schools should consider implementing the following when COVID-19 is detected in their or neighboring communities. Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.

- Consider classroom spacing. Students should be spaced at least 3 feet apart for this approach.
- Provide alternative resources for children and youth with special health care needs.
- Determine if, when, and for how long childcare programs or schools may need to be dismissed.
- If an ill student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case:
 - Local health officials may recommend temporary school dismissals if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case.
 - Schools should work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure.
 - If a student or staff member has been identified with COVID-19, school and program administrators should seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to schools and what additional steps are needed for the school community.
- If schools are dismissed, schools can consider the following steps:
 - Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events.
 - Discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere.
 - Ensure continuity of education.
 - Ensure continuity of meal programs.
 - Consider alternatives for providing essential medical and social services for students.



AFTER a COVID-19 event in your community

Once concern about COVID-19 has subsided, administrators of childcare programs and schools are encouraged to work with local officials to help scale back prevention efforts specific to COVID-19. Recommendations to consider in this phase of response include:

- Meet with the emergency operations coordinator or planning team for your facilities to discuss and note lessons learned.
 - Maintain and expand your planning team.
 - Participate in community-wide emergency preparedness activities.
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