



Updated COVID-19 Standards for Child Care Centers

March 4, 2022

Pursuant to [guidance issued by the Department of Health](#) on February 22, 2022 (attached), and subject to enforcement under the provisions of NJAC 3A:52, the Manual of Requirements for Child Care Centers, the Department of Children and Families is providing notice of the following requirements applicable to all licensed child care centers in the state:

1. Screening and Admittance

- a. Centers must continue to ensure all children, staff and visitors self-screen or are screened by the center upon entry for symptoms of COVID-19 and other communicable diseases specified in NJAC 3A:52-7.1 prior to admittance to the center. Anyone with symptoms of illness as specified in the DOH guidance or child care regulations must be removed or excluded from the center. If the center has questions about symptoms, the center should contact its local health department.
- b. Children excluded from the program must be recorded on the illness log, required under NJAC 3A:52-7.9.

2. Exclusion from Program for Covid-19

- a. Staff or children who test positive for or are diagnosed with Covid-19 must be excluded from the center in accordance with the time frames established in the [DOH guidance](#).
- b. Staff or children who have been fully vaccinated, as defined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, are not required to remain home or quarantine based on exposure to COVID-19, as long as they are asymptomatic.

3. Face Masks

- a. Beginning March 7, 2022, masks will no longer be required for staff, children or visitors in child care centers. Centers may continue to require masks for adults and children over 2 years old, except during rest or sleep times or for children with medical exemptions. Centers shall not prohibit the use of masks by children, staff, or visitors who choose to wear them.
- b. Masks must be worn by anyone testing positive for COVID-19 who is permitted to return to the center sooner than 10 days after the positive test. Refer to the [DOH guidance](#) for more information about these timeframes and guidelines.

4. Staff Vaccinations and Testing Requirements

Covid-19 vaccine and testing requirements for staff established pursuant to Executive Order 264 remain in effect. All child care center staff must provide proof of vaccination or evidence of weekly testing. Questions on this should be directed to your local health department.

5. Enhanced Cleaning and Sanitation Procedures

If a sick child has been isolated in the center, or a child or staff member is confirmed to have had COVID-19 while in the center, spaces occupied by any sick child or staff member should be cleaned and sanitized in accordance with the [DOH guidance](#) and NJAC 3A:52-8.6.

6. Response Procedures for COVID-19 Symptoms or Cases

- a. If a child or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at the facility, they shall be immediately separated from the rest of the population until they can leave the facility. If the child has symptoms of COVID-19, the caregiver waiting with the child should remain as far away as safely possible from the child, and utilize a mask.
- b. Per the New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Operating Child care Programs, centers must report outbreaks or suspected outbreaks to their local health department. An outbreak in school/child care settings is defined as three or more individuals with COVID-19 (positive viral test results) among attendees or

staff with onsets within a 14-day period, who are epidemiologically linked, do not share a household, and were not identified as close contacts of each other in another setting during standard case investigation or contact tracing.

- c. Centers shall continue to consult their local health department regarding questions about symptoms, potential exposure, positive cases or anything COVID-19 related.
- d. The center shall comply with the directives of the local health department.
- e. For additional information and procedures, refer to the New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Operating Child care Programs.

7. Provisions for licensed programs located in operating public schools

- a. If the public school nurse notifies the local health department of Covid-19 outbreaks, including those that occur at the licensed program, it is not necessary for the licensed program to notify the local health department as well.
- b. School-based child care programs shall, in the event of a conflict between rules applicable to licensed child care centers and those applicable to the school in which they are located, adhere to the masking, admittance and exclusion rules in effect for the school.