



Frequently Asked Questions during the Public Health Emergency Updated 6.10.2021

FAQ's based on Updated COVID-19 Standards Child Care Centers, issued May 26,2021

Screening and Admittance

1. Are we still asking all previously required screening questions?

Centers must ask about COVID-19 symptoms spelled out in the Department of Health Recommendations. Those symptoms are:

- Fever equal to or higher than 100.4°F
- Symptoms of contagious illness
- If the child has been exposed to someone with known COVID-19
- If the child is being tested for COVID-19
- If the child has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and not yet cleared to discontinue isolation

2. Is a barrier needed if centers are doing screening?

No, a barrier is no longer required but still can be used.

3. What needs to be included in the screening policy?

The center's screening policy must include the screening method being utilized and the type of documentation that will be maintained (paper, electronic, or otherwise). The center must be able to provide their policy to OOL as well as demonstrate that it is being implemented. Parents and staff shall be made aware of the policy, but OOL is not requiring proof of receipt to be maintained on file.

4. Can we still use an app for screening?

Yes, as per communication sent to centers on December 10, 2020, electronic methods are permissible for screening as long as records can be available for review by OOL.

5. Are temperatures being documented on the daily log?

No, it does not have to be documented. As long as the temperature is below 100.4 when taken by the center or as self-reported by a parent or staff, the person can be admitted.

6. If parents are screening children prior to arrival and informing the center verbally, does this information need to be documented?

Yes, this information must be documented.

7. Are centers still required to use a paper log?

No, a paper log is not required. If centers choose to continue to use a paper log, the newest version may be used as it includes the option for logging the screening method used.

8. Do we need to use the time in and time out on the revised log?

The log provided by OOL is one method centers may choose to use. Time in and time out was added to the log as a tool for centers to track time for tours and visitors as needed, and to possibly eliminate other time in/out methods being used by the center.

9. Are parents required to wear face masks at drop off?

No, parents are not required to wear masks during dropping off and pickup as long as they are not entering the building unless the center has a policy requiring masks. However, now that parents are permitted to enter the center, they need to be screened and masked upon entry.

10. Are child care programs operating in public schools and receiving children directly from the school required to screen children a second time upon arrival at childcare?

No, additional screening of these children will not be required.

11. What are the quarantine requirements after domestic travel?

The travel advisory was lifted as of May 17, 2021. The CDC and Department of Health continue to recommend that unvaccinated travelers quarantine after returning to New Jersey, and centers may opt to adopt a policy which requires this. Though adherence to all public health recommendations is highly encouraged, this is no longer required for licensure or subject to inspection and verification by DCF.

Grouping of Children

12. Why is group size now 30?

This is the maximum group size which applies for school age children only. Younger age groups shall follow the group sizes as outlined in the Manual of Requirements for Child Care centers.

13. Can multiple groups be part of the same cohort?

Yes, if the cohort is consistent and does not exceed group size limits as outlined in the Manual of Requirements for Child Care centers. For example, a group of 12 school aged children in classroom A maybe part of a cohort with a group of 18 school aged children in Classroom B.

14. How do we separate multiple cohorts of children?

Cohorts shall congregate not less than 6 feet in all directions from other groups or be separated by walls or other physical partitions.

15. Does the maximum group size of 30, include just the children or adults and children?

This refers to groups of children, not children and adults.

16. What are the requirements for comingling?

Limited comingling of groups may be permitted under the following circumstances:

- Total attendance is substantially decreased (e.g. the last hour of operation)
- Comingling is limited to sibling/household member groups
- Social distancing of at least 6ft is strictly observed, and mask use for children over the age of two is required, subject to medical limitations.

17. For room dividers/partitions—how tall must they be to separate groups? Is furniture an acceptable barrier/divider?

If groups are no less than 6 feet apart in all directions, they must be separated by walls or other physical barriers to eliminate or minimize exposure risk. Ensure physical barriers are safe, secure and of sufficient height (above the eye level of the staff) wherein exposure from one group to another, including staff, is minimized. Such barriers may include plastic sheets, bed sheets or cubicle walls. Ensure physical barriers do not impact evacuation routes.

18. Regarding partitions, are we supposed to get approval from the local code enforcement department and fire code officials?

Approval from the local code enforcement officials depends on the type of partition. Ensure partitions are stable, secure, and arranged to provide access to a three-foot-wide aisle that leads to an unobstructed exit. If you are looking to make permanent changes to a classroom, please reach out to your inspector for further guidance.

19. Do children in the same cohort have to maintain 6 feet of social distancing from each other?

No, although close contact is discouraged, such as hugging and wrestling, children in the same cohort do not need to be 6 feet apart from each other.

Face Masks

20. Can the centers have a policy that vaccinated staff don't have to wear masks?

No, this would not be permissible as staff are required to wear masks whether vaccinated or not.

21. Are surgical masks still allowed?

Yes, disposable masks are still permitted

22. Are face shields still acceptable?

No, they are no longer acceptable alone, but can be used in conjunction with a face mask or can be worn by staff who are medically precluded from using a mask.

23. Do children have to wear masks if co-mingling if they don't wear them all day long?

Yes, that is one of the criteria for being able to combine groups that are not in the same cohort. If all criteria are not met, groups should remain separate.

24. Are parents allowed to write a letter that their child does not need to wear a mask?

Yes, however as masks are strongly encouraged and not required, the note would not be necessary.

25. Can centers have a policy that all children are required to wear a mask?

Yes, centers can have policies that are more stringent than OOL, just not less stringent.

26. What does encouraged to wear a mask mean? If a child repeatedly refuses, do they need to still have one available at the center?

As long as mask use is not being discouraged, the center is in compliance. Centers should have a supply of masks on hand for visitors and for children and staff in need of an unexpected replacement.

Staffing

27. In order to provide staff breaks, can staff from other rooms be used for coverage?

Staff members who have been fully vaccinated may move between groups as necessary to accommodate breaks, fluctuations in center attendance, substitutions, and other operational needs of the center. Copies of documentation demonstrating staff vaccinations shall be retained by the center and available for

inspection by the Office of Licensing upon request or maintained by staff on their person and available for inspection upon request.

Activities

28. What are the requirements for transporting children?

Per the NJ Department of Health COVID-19 Guidance for Reopening Childcare – Updated May 26, 2021, children must wear masks and maintain social distancing to the greatest extent possible. For questions related to specific scenarios, please contact your local Department of Health.

29. Is outdoor water play permitted?

Yes, water play is permitted including water tables and sprinklers. Water shall be changed between uses.

30. Are we allowed to take the children on field trips?

Field trips off site are strongly discouraged but not prohibited. During transport, masks should be used and social distancing should be maintained to the greatest extent practicable, and centers shall adhere to the transportation related recommendations contained in the COVID-19 Public Health Recommendations for Operating Child Care Centers.

31. Are onsite swim lessons permitted?

Yes, either the child may be signed out of the program based on a permission slip from their parents or the instructor will be screened as required if it is part of the normal daily program.

Visitors

32. Are graduations ceremonies permitted?

Graduations and other special events with parents and visitors are permissible in outdoor spaces and should be separate from non-participating children and staff. Ceremonies happening outside of operating hours, or in non-licensed or off-premises space, or space not utilized for child care purposes, may be permitted indoors so long as these are otherwise permissible under any rules governing indoor gatherings.

33. What are the requirements for admitting visitors to the center?

Visitors to the center, including parents, third party service providers (e.g. therapists, tutors), contractors, inspectors, and all other non-emergency personnel must be subject to the same symptom screening as children and staff before being admitted to the center. Visitors to the center must adhere to the same masking requirements as staff.

Promoting Healthy Hygiene Practices

34. The guidance refers to "hand hygiene stations". Would hand sanitizer stations be sufficient or do we need a sink with running water?

Hand sanitizer can be used by older children and staff. Younger children should be brought to their designated classroom to immediately wash their hands.

35. Are portable sinks permissible?

Yes, they are permissible. Centers utilizing portable sinks must ensure proper cleaning and sanitizing of the system, and that all manufacturer's instructions are followed.

Enhanced Cleaning and Sanitation Procedures

36. Is bleach and water still an acceptable disinfectant? If not, what are the other options? Diluted household bleach solutions may also be used if appropriate for the surface.

- Check the label to see if your bleach is intended for disinfection and has a sodium hypochlorite concentration of 5%–6%. Ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Some bleaches, such as those designed for safe use on colored clothing or for whitening may not be suitable for disinfection.
- Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted. Follow manufacturer’s instructions for application and proper ventilation. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Leave solution on the surface for at least 1 minute.
- To make a bleach solution, mix:
 - i. 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of room temperature water
OR
 - ii. 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of room temperature waterBleach solutions will be effective for disinfection up to 24 hours.

An EPA-registered disinfectant is also acceptable. A list of products that are EPA approved for use against the virus that causes COVID-19 is available at www.epa.gov.

37. Can children share toys?

Within their assigned cohort this is permissible. Any toys that come in contact with bodily fluid should be immediately removed and put aside until they can be properly cleaned and sanitized.

38. Is playground equipment required to be disinfected between uses?

Outdoor surfaces, including outdoor playground equipment, should undergo normal routine cleaning on a daily basis, but do not need to be disinfected between uses.

Response Procedures for COVID-19 Symptoms or Exposure

39. When there is a positive case of COVID-19, how long does the center needs to be closed?

Centers that become aware of a COVID-19 positive case in their facility must contact their local health facility for guidance.

40. Do children need to quarantine after exposure to COVID-19?

Children who have been exposed to COVID-19 must be excluded from the center. Contact your local health department for additional guidance.

Other

41. Is the Monthly Survey of Child Care Center COVID-19 Operations still required?

Yes, as this captures necessary enrollment data.

42. Are postings (i.e. cloth face covering instructions, guidance for cleaning and disinfecting, safe and healthy diapering procedures) still required?

Postings are still recommended but are no longer required.

43. What are the privacy rules regarding a family’s responsibility to report to child care programs? Are families protected by HIPAA?

Public Health is exempt from HIPAA.

44. If a school is doing remote learning or not re-opening right away, will the license become inactive or what will the process be?

Centers that are only offering virtual instruction or remain closed due to COVID-19, are listed as temporarily closed in NJCCIS. The center must notify OOL of their anticipated re-opening date and provide updates to OOL if the date changes.

45. What paperwork must be completed in order to re-open my center? Is there any additional paperwork I need to complete?

Inform OOL inspection staff of your re-opening date or any changes to your reopening date.

46. Do parents still have to sign in and out themselves or can staff track attendance? If they need to sign in/out, how do we accomplish this task?

The Child Care Manual does not require parents to sign the children in and out. The center is required to ensure the arrival and departure time is recorded for all staff and children. It is acceptable to eliminate parent involvement in this process and have the staff record this information.

47. When conducting fire drills and emergency drills are there guidelines that need to be followed in order to maintain social distancing?

Fire drills shall be done within the assigned groups so as not to increase exposure. While DCF is not requiring lockdown drills at this time, centers may develop policies and procedures to ensure social distancing requirements are met if they choose to conduct a lockdown drill.

48. Who should I contact if I have questions pertaining to licensed child care centers, the FAQ's or the DCF COVID-19 Health and Safety Requirements?

Contact the Office of Licensing at DCF.ChildCareLicensing@dcf.nj.gov with your contact information, including the city and county in which the program is located.