Interim Guidance for Child Care Programs

January 4, 2021

This guidance was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) for local use. It will be posted at sfdcp.org/CovidSchoolsChildcare.

AUDIENCE: Child care programs. For the purposes of this guidance, child care programs refers to all group care facilities for children who are not yet in elementary school. This includes child care centers; child development facilities; family child care homes; and preschools, transitional kindergarten, pre-kindergartens and kindergarten programs that are not part of an elementary school.

Summary of Changes since the 10/16/2020 Version

- Face masks required for children ages 24 months and up and for staff when working alone in spaces where others may enter or use later.
- Programs must post Ventilation Checklist signs at building entrances, as well as other signs. Section on required signs added.
- Outdoor programs must follow CDPH guidance on outdoor structures.
- Clarification on child care closure due to COVID-19 added.
- Information on required quarantine after travel added.
- Ventilation section updated. Fire doors should not be propped or wedged open.
- Recommendations for plexiglass barriers updated.
- Recommendation to promote flu vaccination during flu season added.

PURPOSE: To help child care programs understand health and safety practices needed to prevent spread of COVID-19 in their programs.

BACKGROUND: Since the start of the COVID-19 epidemic, our understanding of COVID-19 and how it spreads has increased tremendously. We also know much more about how to keep COVID-19 from spreading in child care programs. Some behaviors, like physical distancing, can be difficult for young children. However by coordinating and layering effective interventions, childcare programs can minimize the risk of infection for staff and children, while continuing to meet children’s developmental and socio-emotional needs.

The guidelines below are based on the best science available at this time and the current degree of COVID-19 transmission in San Francisco. They are subject to change as new knowledge emerges and as local community transmission changes.
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Key messages for child care programs

- **Address adult-to-adult transmission**, and **adults as sources of infection**. In many cases, staff are the source of COVID-19 in a program. Although children can be infected with COVID-19 and can spread it to adults, spread of infection between adults is more common.

- **Preventing person-to-person transmission via respiratory droplets is more important than frequent cleaning and disinfection**. COVID-19 mostly spreads from person-to-person in the air through virus-containing droplets in the breath of someone with COVID-19.
  - These respiratory droplets enter the air when a person breathes, especially when they talk, sing, cough, sneeze or exercise. In poorly ventilated indoor spaces, smaller droplets from a person’s breath can stay floating in the air and travel more than 6 feet.
  - The virus that causes COVID-19 must enter a person’s eyes, nose or mouth to infect them. People are infected when they breathe in virus-containing droplets, or when the virus lands in their eyes, nose or mouth.

  COVID-19 can also spread if a person touches their eyes, nose or mouth after touching a contaminated surface (also known as a fomite), but this is less common.

- **Face coverings, physical distancing, and indoor ventilation** are most important in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
• **Exposure risk lies along a continuum.** A rule of thumb is that a person be within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more, over the course of a day, to be at risk of infection.
  
  o Spending less time together is safer than more time; being further apart is safer than being closer together.
  
  o Smaller groups are safer than larger ones. Being outdoors is safer than being indoors.
  
  o More people using face coverings is better than fewer people using face coverings.
  
  o Activities that produce fewer respiratory droplets are lower risk than those that produce many droplets (silence < quiet talking < loud talking < singing).

• **When working with young children, COVID-19 prevention needs to consider children’s developmental and socio-emotional needs.** The benefits of early childhood education are well-known, and children are at low risk for severe COVID-19 and for rare but serious complications like multisystem inflammatory syndrome in children (MIS-C).

  Any shift toward providing a more typical childcare experience should **not put staff at greater risk.** Recommendations for physical distancing and face coverings should prioritize staff safety.

### Establishing procedures and protocols

- Designate a COVID-19 staff liaison to be the single point of contact at each site for questions or concerns around practices, protocols, or potential exposure. This person will also serve as a liaison to SFDPH.

- Establish health and safety protocols to prevent COVID-19 transmission.
  
  o Train staff and teach children about health and safety practices.
  
  o Create a health and safety plan outlining what the program will do to implement the requirements in this guidance and any relevant Health Officer Directives or orders. Share this plan with staff, families, and other members of the childcare community.

- During the two weeks before the program re-opens and while the program is open, avoid in-person staff development, meetings, or team-building activities that bring together staff who will be working with different cohorts.

- Work with SFDPH to support testing strategies to limit spread of COVID-19. This may include testing for staff or children, with parental consent.

- Establish protocols for staff and children with symptoms of COVID-19 and for communication with staff, families and children after COVID-19 exposure or a confirmed COVID-19 case in the program.

### Staff Considerations

*Protect staff, especially those at higher risk of severe COVID-19. See [sfcdcp.org/vulnerable](https://sfcdcp.org/vulnerable) for a list of groups at higher risk for severe COVID-19.*

- Offer options that limit exposure risk to staff who are in groups at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness (e.g., telework, reassignment, or modified job duties to minimize direct interaction with children and staff).
• Avoid assigning staff at higher risk for severe COVID-19 to screen people for symptoms or monitor/care for sick children waiting to be picked up.

• Consider the use of face shields, to be used with face coverings, for staff whose duties make it difficult for them to stay 6 feet apart from others.

• Implement sick leave policies that support staff in staying home when ill.

• Plan ahead for staff absences of 10-14 days due to COVID-19 infection or exposure, as community transmission of COVID-19 increases. Cross-train staff and have a roster of back-up staff experienced in working with children. **Avoid combining cohorts when staff are absent**, as this increases the risk of infection spreading in your program.

**Considerations for Children**

• Prioritize enrollment of the following groups:
  o At-risk children, including:
    ▪ Children who are clients of Family and Children’s Services (FCS) or are at risk of abuse, neglect, or exploitation
    ▪ Children eligible through the Emergency Childcare Bridge Program for Foster Children
    ▪ Children experiencing homelessness
    ▪ Children of domestic violence survivors
    ▪ Children with disabilities or special health care needs whose individualized education programs (IEP) and/or individual family support plans (IFSP) include ELC services
    ▪ Children from low-income families, including those who receive or are eligible for free or reduced school lunch, Medi-Cal, SNAP (food stamps), WIC, Head Start, CalWorks and other public assistance programs.
  o Children of people who work in essential businesses or essential governmental functions, followed by people who work in other businesses and organizations that are allowed to open under San Francisco Health Orders.

• Do not exclude children because of medical conditions that may increase their risk of getting very sick from COVID-19. Allow the child’s medical team and family to determine whether in-person attendance is safe.

**Required Signs**

Programs must post the following signs, under **San Francisco Health Order C19-07o**.

• **Reporting unsafe conditions related to COVID-19**
  Post in staff break rooms and other staff areas.

  Signs must say that personnel can report violations of COVID-19 health orders and directives by calling 311 or online at [https://www.sf.gov/report-health-order-violation](https://www.sf.gov/report-health-order-violation), and that he employee’s identity will not be disclosed to the employer.

• **Reminder to wear a face covering, stay 6 feet apart, and stay home if ill**.
  Post at all public entrances and other places where the signs will be easily noticed.
  SFDPH approved signs are online at [sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19](https://sf.gov/outreach-toolkit-coronavirus-covid-19)
• **Ventilation Checklists** (indoor programs only)
Signs must list how the program is ventilated:
  - All available windows and doors are kept open
  - Fully operational HVAC systems
  - Appropriately sized portable air cleaners in each room
  - None of the above

• **Indoor Risk of COVID-19** (indoor programs only)
Signs must say that
  - COVID-19 is transmitted through the air, and the risk is generally higher indoors.
  - Seniors and those with health risks should avoid indoor settings with crowds.

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**Strategies to prevent spread of COVID-19 in child care settings**

**Prevent COVID-19 from entering the program**

**Screen everyone entering the program for COVID-19.**

- Ask all persons entering the program about symptoms of COVID-19 and exposure to COVID-19 – including staff, children, parents/caregivers, visitors, contractors, and government officials. Emergency personnel responding to a 9-1-1 call do not need to be screened.
- Both outdoor and indoor programs must screen all participants, staff, and others entering the program.
- Do not allow people who answer “yes” to any of the screening questions to enter the program.
- Programs may also choose to require temperature checks of people entering the program, done either on-site or by parents at home. SFDPH does not require temperature checks.
  - Per CCLD/CDSS, only programs with a “non-touch” (infrared) thermometer should routinely check temperatures when children and/or staff arrive. Thermometers that touch the child (under the tongue or arm, forehead, etc.) should only be used when staff suspect fever or illness. SFDPH also recommends “non-touch” thermometers when checking temperatures of people entering a program.
- For detailed guidance on conducting COVID-19 screening, see [sfcdcp.org/screen](https://sfcdcp.org/screen) and [COVID-19 Health Checks at Programs for Children and Youth](https://sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare) (children)

**Staff and children who are sick must stay home.**

- Remind families to keep children home when ill. A parent/guardian handout, “COVID-19 Health Checks/If Your Child has Symptoms” is available at [https://sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare](https://sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare).
- Encourage family members of children and staff to get tested promptly if they have symptoms of COVID-19, to lower the risk of spreading infection to children and staff.
Staff and children must stay home for 10 days after travel outside the Bay Area.

- SFDPH requires that travelers quarantine at home for 10 days after non-essential travel outside the Bay Area, effective 12/18/2020. For more information, see: [https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/COVID-Travel-Advisory.pdf](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/COVID-Travel-Advisory.pdf)
- CDPH also recommends quarantine after travel outside of California. [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Travel-Advisory.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Travel-Advisory.aspx)
- In addition, the State of California does not allow non-essential travel under the Regional Stay Home Order, which currently applies to the Bay Area as well as most of California. [https://covid19.ca.gov/stay-home-except-for-essential-needs/#regional-stay-home-order](https://covid19.ca.gov/stay-home-except-for-essential-needs/#regional-stay-home-order)

Restrict non-essential visitors

- Limit non-essential visitors, including volunteers.
- Discourage parents and other family members from entering the building.
- Therapists who are not childcare employees but work with children on-site, such as ABA therapists, occupational therapists and physical therapists, are considered essential staff and should be allowed to provide services.
- Cancel special events that involve parents and families, such as festivals, holiday events, and performances.
- Redesign tours and open houses to meet SFDPH and CDPH requirements for gatherings, summarized at [https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/Gatherings-Tips.pdf](https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/covid-guidance/Gatherings-Tips.pdf). Do not allow tours when children are present. Keep a log of all persons present. At this time, in-person tours and open houses are not allowed.

Promote flu vaccination during influenza season

*Preventing influenza is especially important during the COVID-19 epidemic, because people who have flu and COVID-19 at the same time are more than twice as likely to die. Flu vaccination also can help reduce absences of staff and children due to possible COVID-19 symptoms.*

- Strongly encourage all personnel, families, and children to get a flu vaccine this year. Consider posting signs to encourage flu vaccination.
Keep staff and children in small, stable groups (“cohorts”).

A cohort is a stable group that has the same staff and children each day, stays together for all activities (lunch, recess, etc.), and avoids contact with people outside the group. Keeping staff and children in the same small cohort lowers their exposure risk by limiting the number of people they interact with.

Limit cohort size

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Child Care</th>
<th>Maximum cohort size (Staff and Children)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Childcare Center</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Childcare Home (FCCH)</td>
<td>16, or the maximum number of children allowed by the childcare’s license, whichever is lower.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- A cohort can have up to 4 staff, including volunteers. Follow state-required staff-child ratios.
- The maximum cohort size applies to everyone in the cohort, even if not they do not attend or work at the program at the same time. For example,
  - A cohort may not include 2 staff, 6 children who attend full-time, 6 children on Mon/Wed/Fri, and 6 children on Tu/Th (total of 20).
  - A cohort may not include 2 staff, 8 children who attend for the entire day, 4 who attend mornings only, and 4 who attend afternoons only (total of 18).
  - A cohort may not include 14 children, a teacher, one parent-volunteer on Mon/Wed/Fri, and a 2nd-parent volunteer on Tu/Th (total of 17).
- Newly enrolled children may join a cohort at any time, but they must enroll for a period of at least 3 weeks. Do not allow children to attend for shorter periods, for example, for a day or a week during school holidays.
- Staff who work with children over 5 years of age must be assigned to only one cohort and work only with that cohort. Staff may not work with more than one cohort of children. For example,
  - Staff working with children over 5 may not work with one cohort on Mon/Wed/Fri, and another cohort on Tu/Th.
  - Staff working with children over 5 may not work with 1 cohort in the mornings, and another in the afternoons.
- Staff who work only with children 0-5 years of age may be assigned to two cohorts. Programs where staff work with two cohorts must place staff in groups of up to 4 staff members. Everyone in a staff group must work with the same two cohorts. Staff must work only with other staff in their staff group, and can only be in 1 staff group. For example:
  - Allowed: (3 staff members in a group working with 2 cohorts)
    Staff A and B work with one cohort of children on Mon/Wed/Fri.
    Staff B and C work with a different cohort of children on Tu/Th.
  - Not allowed (5 staff members working with 2 cohorts):
    Staff A, B and C work with one cohort of children on Mon/Wed/Fri.
    Staff C, D and E work with another cohort of children on Tu/Th.
• Not allowed: (4 staff members working with 3 cohorts)
  Staff A and B work with cohort 1 on Mon/Wed/Fri.
  Staff A and C work with cohort 2 on Tu/Th mornings.
  Staff B and D work with cohort 3 on Tu/Th afternoons.

• Substitute providers who are covering for short-term staff absences are allowed, but must work with only one cohort of children per day.

• “Floaters,” who provide brief coverage for providers throughout the day, must work with only one cohort of children per day.

• When determining the number of staff in a cohort, do not count people who provide one-to-one services to individual children but do not interact with the entire cohort. This includes but is not limited to occupational therapists, physical therapists, speech and language therapists, and ABA providers. See the San Francisco Health Directive on Specialized Support Services for more information at https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/Directive-2020-26-Specialized-Support.pdf

• Avoid moving staff from one cohort to another if possible.

Keep cohorts from mixing.

• Each cohort must be in a separate room or space.

• Minimize interactions between cohorts, including interactions between staff in different cohorts.
  o Stagger playground time and other activities so that no two cohorts are in the same place at the same time.
  o Do not hold activities that bring different cohorts together, even if outdoors wearing face coverings.

• Assign children who live together or carpool together to the same cohort, if possible and consistent with age and developmental needs.

• Avoid moving children from one cohort to another, unless needed for a child’s overall safety and wellness.

Partition large indoor spaces to prevent direct air flow between cohorts.

• A room divider or partition may be used to allow more than one cohort to use a large indoor space if the following requirements are met.
  o All cohorts are from the same childcare program.
  o Staff and children can access bathrooms, kitchens, and other common areas or exits without entering another cohort’s space. If one cohort must pass through another cohort’s space is required to pass through to another space, the time spent must be as brief as possible. It is preferable to use partitions to separate the pass-through space from both cohorts.
  o The room divider must prevent direct air flow between cohorts.
    ▪ Best Practice: Solid, non-permeable, cleanable partitions extending from the floor to as close to the ceiling as practical to reduce direct and indirect air flow between cohorts.
- Minimum Requirement: Solid non-permeable, cleanable partitions extending from the floor and at least 8 feet high.
  - The room divider must not:
    - Interfere with ventilation of each space (e.g., windows must be present on either side of the partition, or if mechanical ventilation is used, supply and return diffusers must be present on each side of the partition)
    - Obstruct sprinkler systems, access to emergency exits and other fire and building codes.
  - If smoke detectors are required and/or are in use in the building, separate smoke detectors may be required on each side of the room divider. Seek consultation as needed for each facility.

**Physical distancing**

*Physical distancing decreases the risk of COVID-19 from respiratory droplets. Maintain physical distancing between adults as much as possible. Physical distancing between young children should be balanced with developmental and socio-emotional needs of this age group.*

- Stay 6 feet from other adults, including staff in the same cohort, as much as possible.
  - Set up offices and staff rooms so that staff do not work or sit within 6 feet of each other.
  - Encourage virtual meetings using video conferencing apps for parent-teacher meetings and staff meetings, even when all staff are present in the facility.
- Stay 6 feet away from children as much as possible while meeting their developmental and learning needs.
- During individual activities, keep children 6 feet apart as much as possible.
- Rearrange furniture and play spaces to prevent crowding and promote physical distancing between children who are not playing together.
- Offer more opportunities for individual activities, such as painting or crafts. Choose group activities that do not involve close contact between children.
- At naptime, place children’s mats or cribs as far apart as possible, so that their heads are at least 6 feet apart. Have children lie on their mats so that they are head-to-toe (see diagram).
- During group activities, playtime and recess, physical distancing may be relaxed for young children, especially if outside and wearing face masks.
- Prioritize preventing interactions between cohorts over physical distancing within a cohort in shared spaces like outdoor areas, hallways and bathrooms.
• Limit occupancy of bathrooms, elevators, staff rooms and similar shared spaces to allow 6 feet of distancing. Adjacent bathroom stalls may be used. Post signs with occupancy limits.

• At places where people congregate or wait in line, mark spots on the floor or the walls 6 feet apart to indicate where to stand.

Face masks and cloth face coverings

Face masks and other cloth face coverings keep people from spreading infection, by trapping respiratory droplets before they can travel through the air. In childcare programs where physical distancing can be challenging, face coverings are one of the most important measures to prevent COVID-19.

For this guidance, “face masks” includes cloth face coverings that cover the mouth and nose.

• All adults and children 24 months and older must wear face masks over both their nose and mouth, except when eating or sleeping.
  
  o Do not allow adults or children over 2 year old into the program unless they are wearing a face mask or have documentation of a medical contraindication to face masks.
  
  o Require that family members and caregivers wear face masks when dropping-off or picking-up children.

• Provide face masks to children who forget to bring their face mask. Reusable cloth face masks are recommended over disposable masks, and can be sent home with families to be laundered.

• Keep a supply of face masks for other individuals who have forgotten to bring one.

• Some children may need additional support to consistently wear face masks. Programs should take into account equity and each child’s individual circumstances when deciding how to best support a child in wearing face masks.

• For children with documented medical exemptions to face masks due to developmental delay, autism or other conditions that limit their ability to tolerate face masks, encourage and remind them to wear their face mask as much as possible.

  For children who have difficulty keeping their face masks on at all times, prioritize consistent face mask use during the following times:
  
  o When in hallways, bathrooms, yards or other shared spaces where children may encounter staff and children from other cohorts.
  
  o During times where physical distancing is relaxed.
  
  o When a child is ill and waiting to be picked up (and is not asleep).
  
  o When in public and within 6 feet of others, for example, while walking to a nearby park or outside the program at drop-off. CDPH requires face masks for children ages 2 and up in public. Wearing face masks at drop off also protects staff who are screening children for COVID-19.

• Face masks must be removed for naps.

• Avoid excluding children from childcare or using punitive measures if they initially have difficulty wearing a face mask. Continue to encourage and remind them to wear their face covering. A child who refuses to wear face mask at home may be more willing to wear a face mask in a setting where all staff and other children are consistently wearing them.
Exemptions to cloth face coverings; use of face shields

- Children 0-1 year old must not wear face coverings due to the risk of suffocation.
- People who are unconscious, asleep, or unable to remove a face mask independently.
- Children with documented medical or behavioral contraindications to face masks are exempt. This includes children who are unable to tolerate face masks due to autism or sensory sensitivity, and children unable to remove a face mask independently due to developmental delay or disability.
- Staff with a medical contraindication documented by a medical provider to a face covering may be allowed to wear a face shield with a cloth drape on the bottom tucked into the top of their shirt. However, this is not as effective as a face mask in preventing spread of infection. Asthma, claustrophobia, and anxiety are not usually considered to be contraindications to face masks.
- Staff working alone in a private indoor space do not need to wear a face mask if
  - The space is completely enclosed (i.e. a private office, not a cubicle), and
  - Other people are not likely to enter the space during the next few days
- Staff working with children who are hard-of-hearing may use a clear mask (a disposable or cloth face mask with a clear inset). If this is not feasible, a face shield with a cloth drape tucked into the shirt may also be used. Staff must wear a face mask at other times, for example, in staff-only areas.
- Do not use face shields in place of face masks in other situations. Face shields have not been shown to keep the wearer from infecting others.
- Consider using a face shield in addition to a face mask. Face shields provide additional eye protection for the wearer. When used with a mask, a cloth drape is not needed.

For more information, see
https://www.sfdph.org/dph/alerts/files/Order-C19-12-Face-Coverings.pdf
https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/guidance-for-face-coverings.aspx

Hand hygiene

Frequent handwashing and hand sanitizer use removes COVID-19 germs from people’s hands before they can infect themselves by touching their eyes, nose or mouth.

- Develop routines and schedules for staff and children to wash or sanitize their hands frequently, including:
  - Immediately after arriving,
  - Before and after eating,
  - Before naptime (pay special attention to handwashing before and after naptime for children who suck their thumbs),
  - After going to the bathroom or diapering, and
  - After wiping noses, coughing or sneezing.
- Post signs to remind staff and children of hand hygiene.
• Hand hygiene signs for adults in multiple languages are at: [http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-825.pdf](http://eziz.org/assets/docs/IMM-825.pdf)

• Hand hygiene posters for children in multiple languages are at: [https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html](https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html)

• Educate children and staff about basic measures to prevent the spread of infection, including covering one’s coughs and sneezes and washing hands frequently.

• Keep hand sanitizer out of the reach of young children, and supervise use.
  ▪ The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) does not recommend hand sanitizer for children under 24 months old.
  ▪ Call Poison Control if hand sanitizer is consumed at 1-800-222-1222.

**Ventilation and outdoor spaces**

*Increasing outdoor air circulation lowers the risk of infection by “diluting” any infectious respiratory droplets with outdoor air. Being outside is even lower risk.*

**Outdoor spaces**

• Do as many activities outside as possible, especially snacks/meals and exercise

• Stagger use of outdoor spaces to keep cohorts from mixing. If the outdoor space is large enough, consider designating separate spaces for each cohort.

• Outdoor spaces may be covered (e.g. with a canopy). Outdoor tents, canopies and shelters must follow CDPH guidelines at [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Use-of-Temporary-Structures-for-Outdoor-Business-Operations.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/Use-of-Temporary-Structures-for-Outdoor-Business-Operations.aspx) as well as any additional guidance from SFDPH.

• If used, outdoor playgrounds/natural play areas only need routine maintenance. Make sure that children wash or sanitize their hands before and after using these spaces. When hand hygiene is emphasized, cleaning and disinfection of outdoor structures play is not required between cohorts.

**Make sure that indoor spaces are well-ventilated.**

*Ventilation systems can decrease the number of respiratory droplets and infectious particles in the air by replacing indoor air with fresh, uncontaminated air and/or filtering infectious droplets out of the air.*

• Review [SFDPH Ventilation Guidance](https://sfcdcp.org/CovidSchoolsChildcare). Make as many improvements as feasible.
  
  o Note which improvements you made, and keep a copy of your notes.

  o Your program can use ventilation guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), CDPH, or the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) instead of SFDPH’s guidance.

**Ventilation recommendations include:**

• Open windows to increase natural ventilation with outdoor air when health and safety allow. When possible, consider also leaving room doors slightly open to promote flow of outdoor air through the indoor space.
  
  o Do not prop or wedge open fire doors. Continue to follow fire and building safety requirements.
- If open windows pose a risk of falls for children, use window locks to keep windows from opening more than 4 inches, or other safety devices to prevent falls.

- If your program has an HVAC system (sometimes called mechanical ventilation, forced air, or central air), follow the recommendations in SFDPH Ventilation Guidance. Prioritize maximizing the intake of outdoor air and minimizing recirculated air during the COVID-19 pandemic. Recommendations include:
  - Make sure the HVAC system is checked by a professional and is working properly.
  - Open outdoor air dampers and close recirculation dampers (“economizers”). This will maximize the amount of outdoor air that the HVAC system takes in, and minimize the amount of indoor air that is recirculated.
  - If you can use higher-efficiency air filters without reducing airflow or damaging your HVAC system, use air filters rated MERV13 or better.
  - Disable “demand-control ventilation controls” so fans keep running even when a room doesn’t need to be heated or cooled.
  - Keep the HVAC system running even when the building is not being used, if you can. If your HVAC system has a timer, set it to run, at a minimum, from 1-2 hours before the building opens until 2-3 hours after everyone has left the building, including custodial staff.

- Consider installing portable air cleaners (“HEPA filters”).

- If your program uses fans, adjust the direction of fans so that air does not blow from one individual’s space to another’s space.

For more information about ventilation, see www.sfcdcp.org/COVID-ventilation...

Cleaning and disinfection

Many household disinfectants are effective. Refer to EPA’s List N for EPA-approved disinfectants effective against COVID-19.

- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, toys, and objects at least daily.
  - Routine cleaning for COVID-19 focuses on frequently touched surfaces like door handles, desks, countertops, phones, keyboards, light switches, handles, toilets and faucets.
  - Toys that may be put in a child’s mouth should be cleaned and sanitized.
  - Remove toys that are difficult to clean (e.g. soft toys, “loveys”), or make sure that they are used only by individual children and not shared.
  - Books and paper-based items do not need to be cleaned.
  - For detailed guidance, see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#CleanDisinfect

- Cleaning after a suspected or known case of COVID-19 uses the same cleaning agents and disinfectants as for routine cleaning, but includes the following steps:
  - Open windows and use fans to air out the areas to be cleaned.
  - Wait 24 hours, or as long as practical, before cleaning and disinfection.
Clean and disinfect all surfaces in the areas used by the ill person, including electronic equipment. Vacuum the space if needed.


**Specific Situations**

**Carpooling**

*Since vehicles are small enclosed spaces that do not allow physical distancing, it is easier for COVID-19 to spread between people in the car or van, especially if everyone does not wear a mask... Biking and walking are lower risk than shared vehicles.*

- Advise staff and families to carpool with the same stable group of people. Open windows and turn up the fan to ventilate the vehicle with outdoor air as much as possible... Everyone in the vehicle must wear a face covering.

**Drop-off and pick-up**

*Limit staff contact with families at drop-off and pick-up*

- Require family members and caregivers to wear face masks when dropping off or picking up children.
- Staff should stay 6 feet away from parents and caregivers.
- Stagger arrival and drop-off times to limit contact between families, if possible.
- Consider curbside drop-off and pick-up, where staff come outside the facility to pick up the children as they arrive, and bring children outside to be picked up.
- Post signs to remind family members to stay 6 feet away from people from other households when dropping off or picking up their child.
- Mark spaces 6 feet apart for children waiting to be screened at drop-off and for adults waiting to pick up children.

**Caring for infants and toddlers**

**Washing, Feeding, or Holding a Young Child**

*Washing, feeding or holding a child increases the risk of COVID-19 via respiratory droplets because of the close distance, especially if the child is crying. Skin contact with tears, mucus, and other secretions is much lower risk than the risk of breathing in respiratory droplets at such a close distance.*

- Before holding a child aged 2 or over, the child should ideally be wearing a face covering over their mouth and nose, except when feeding. Consider wearing a face shield in addition to a face covering for added protection.
• When holding or physically comforting a crying child, try to position the child so that they are not directly facing you (sitting sideways in a lap, for example, or standing slightly behind the child while rubbing their back). Try to keep your face away from child’s face while holding or comforting them. Consider taking the child outside to comfort them.

• Consider covering your regular clothes with a smock or large shirt to keep tears, mucus, saliva or secretions from touching your clothing. For details, see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#InfantsToddlers.

• Wash your hands, as well as any skin that a child’s tears, mucus or other secretions has touched, as soon as possible.

Diapering
Although the virus that causes COVID-19 has been found in stool, there has been no known spread of COVID-19 from stool or diapering. However, norovirus and other infections can be spread by stool.

• Follow the usual safe diapering procedures, including wearing gloves and handwashing before and after. For more information, see https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#InfantsToddlers

Meals and snacks
Eating together is especially high risk for COVID-19 transmission because people must remove their face coverings to eat and drink. Children often eat with their hands, and both children and adults often touch their mouths with their hands while eating. In addition, meals are usually considered time for talking together, which further increases risk, especially if children must speak loudly to be heard.

• Try not to eat with other staff, especially indoors. This is a common way that staff are exposed to COVID-19 at work.

• Eating outdoors is safer than eating indoors. Outdoor eating areas may be covered (e.g. with an awning).

• Use individually plated or bagged meals instead of family-style meals.

• Consider staggering snack and lunch times so more people can eat outdoors without mixing cohorts.

• Space children as far apart as possible when eating, and try to seat them so they do not sit face-to-face. Physical distancing is especially important when eating, since face coverings cannot be worn.

• Make sure that children and staff wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately before and after eating. Pay special attention to children who like to suck/lick food off their hands.

• Consider starting lunch with silent eating time, followed by conversation time, to discourage talking while face coverings are off.

• Stay 6 feet away from children when their face coverings are off as much as possible, especially when indoors.

• Clean and disinfect tables and chairs between different cohorts. Sidewalks and asphalt do not have to be disinfected.
Staff spaces: offices, break rooms and work rooms

Staff often do not view themselves and colleagues as sources of infection, and forget to take precautions with co-workers, especially during social interactions such as breaks or lunch time.

- Post the maximum occupancy for break rooms and other staff spaces, based on 6 foot distancing. If needed, mark places on the floor 6 feet apart for staff to sit or stand.
- Post signage reminding staff to stay 6 feet apart, keep their face coverings on unless eating, wash their hands before and after eating, and disinfect their area after using it.
- Discourage staff from eating together, especially indoors. Consider creating a private outdoor area for staff to eat and take breaks.
- Open windows and doors to maximize ventilation, when feasible, especially if staff are eating or if the room is near maximum occupancy.

Other activities to avoid: group singing, field trips and toothbrushing

- Avoid group singing, especially indoors.
- Field trips are currently prohibited
- Discontinue brushing teeth at childcares.

What to do when someone has COVID-19 symptoms or confirmed COVID-19

Refer to the Quick Guide for Suspected or Confirmed COVID-19 Cases.

First, see “When someone has suspected or confirmed COVID-19: Quick Guide for Schools, Childcares, and Programs for Children and Youth” at https://sfcdcp.org/CovidSchoolsChildcare for the following summary charts:

- Steps to take when staff or children have COVID-19 symptoms, confirmed COVID-19, or were exposed to COVID-19 (for example, a parent or sibling has tested positive)
- Returning to the program after COVID-19 symptoms, confirmed COVID-19, or exposure to COVID-19.

When staff or children with symptoms of COVID-19

- Staff who become ill while at work must notify their supervisor and leave work as soon as they can.
- Send children with symptoms home. Keep ill children who are waiting to be picked up in a separate area, away from other children. Make sure that they keep their face masks on.
- When a parent or guardian arrives to pick up a child, walk the child outside to meet them if possible instead of allowing the parent or guardian into the building. Since children with COVID-19 may have been infected by a parent or other adult in their home, the parent may also have COVID-19.
- Open windows in areas used by the sick person to air out those spaces and bring in outdoor air. Close off those areas as soon as you can, until they can be cleaned and disinfected.
When there is a confirmed COVID-19 case, take these steps

All documents listed below are online at sfcdcp.org/COVIDSchoolsChildcare.

1. Use the Exposure and Investigation Tool to collect the important details about the case BEFORE contacting the SFDPH Schools and Childcare Hub.

2. If possible, obtain a copy of the lab report and attach it to Exposure and Investigation tool. If you do not have the test results yet, please note the test results are pending.

3. Report the case to the SFDPH Schools and Childcare Hub by emailing schools-childcaresites@sfdph.org (please put SECURE: in the subject line) OR by calling (628) 217-7499. An on-call public health professional will get back to you as soon as possible.

4. The Schools and Childcare Hub may ask you to identify people who had close contact with the COVID-19 case and may have been infected. When interviewing people to determine if they had close contact, and informing them that they may have been exposed, do not disclose the identity of the person with COVID-19, as required by law. For more information, see the FAQ for child care programs on contact tracing.

5. Use the List of Close Contacts template to collect details of any close contacts.

6. Email the List of Close Contacts to schools-childcaresites@sfdph.org within 24 hours. Please put SECURE: in the subject line of the email.

7. Communicate to staff and families in your program as indicated in the Quick Guide. SFDPH has developed standard notification letters for child care programs. Translations will be posted at sfcdcp.org/CovidSchoolsChildcare.

   - Close Contact Advisory — Children and Youth under 18
   - Close Contact Advisory — Adult
   - General Exposure Advisory — Children and Youth under 18
   - General Exposure Advisory — Adult
   - Notification of an child or staff in quarantine for exposure to COVID-19

Close the areas used by the ill person.

- Open windows in areas used by the sick person to maximize outdoor air circulation. Close off those areas as soon as feasible, until they can be cleaned and disinfected.

Deciding if your program should close due to COVID-19

Programs should avoid unilaterally closing due to community surges in COVID-19, without direction from public health officials. Doing so may not decrease the risk to staff and children, and in fact may lead to more COVID-19 infections due to staff and children spending more time in settings where the risk of transmission is higher than in child care programs.

Even when COVID-19 is widespread in the general community, COVID-19 transmission inside childcare has remained rare. Almost all cases of COVID-19 in childcares in San Francisco have been in staff and children who were infected outside of the childcare. Routine testing of elementary school staff and students has also provided reassuring evidence of the lack of transmission in supervised programs for children.
This reflects the success of child care programs in implementing precautions like face masks, physical distancing, hand hygiene, and staying home when sick. When these basic precautions are enforced, they are very effective at keeping COVID-19 from spreading. In contrast, people not following these precautions in informal or unsupervised settings has been largely responsible for community spread of COVID-19.

The decision to close a child care program should be based on COVID-19 cases in the child care, not on community COVID-19 rates, which may not reflect the conditions at the child care program. Any decisions should be made in consultation with the SFDPH Schools and Childcare Hub. In general,

- Programs with smaller, more contained cohorts are less likely to require program-wide closure.
- Programs with multiple cases in multiple cohorts or cases affecting a significant portion of students and staff are more likely to require program-wide closure.

Closures are generally for 14 days, and are meant to prevent further transmission within the child care as well as to better understand how transmission in a child care program occurred, in order to prevent repeat outbreaks.
Resources

San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH)

- **SFDPH Schools and Childcare Hub** for COVID-19 consultation and guidance (628) 217-7499 or email Schools-childcaresites@sfdph.org
- COVID-19 guidance for the public at [https://sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://sfcdcp.org/covid19)
- COVID-19 guidance for child care programs at [https://sfcdcp.org/CovidSchoolsChildcare](https://sfcdcp.org/CovidSchoolsChildcare)
  - “What to do when someone has suspected or confirmed COVID-19: Quick Guide for Schools, Childcares, and Programs for Children and Youth”
  - “Parent and Caregiver Handout: COVID-19 Health Checks/If Your Child has Symptoms” Instructions for parents on health screenings and returning to childcare after symptoms.
  - “Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ): COVID 19 Contact Tracing At Schools, Childcares, and Programs for Children and Youth”
- “Leaving Isolation or Returning to Work for Those Who Have Confirmed or Suspected COVID-19” at [https://www.sfcdcp.org/rtw](https://www.sfcdcp.org/rtw)

California Department of Public Health (CDPH)

- “Guidance for Small Cohorts/Groups of Children and Youth” issued 9/4/2020 [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/small-groups-child-youth.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/small-groups-child-youth.aspx)
- “COVID-19 Case and Contact Management Within Child Care Facilities” issued 8/25/2020 [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/contact-management-childcare-facilities.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/COVID-19/contact-management-childcare-facilities.aspx)

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)