

FAQs to accompany the Modification to Certified Child Care Center Requirements document

The Commissioner of Human Services has temporarily modified certain requirements for licensed child care centers, whose services have been designated as essential during the peacetime emergency due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to the modifications issued on March 20, 2020, which temporarily suspended routine inspections and the issuance of correction orders and other licensing actions, these modifications are necessary to provide flexibility to providers, mitigate the spread of the virus, and protect the health and safety of children and staff.

Certified child care centers who continue to operate are permitted to follow the [temporary modifications to requirements](#) during the COVID-19 pandemic. These temporary modifications are effective April 9, 2020, until the conclusion of the peacetime emergency.

Once the Governor lifts the peacetime emergency order, any program that was certified before the pandemic, shall resume following all of the child care center certification requirements in place prior to the pandemic as set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Chapters 245C and 245H.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who should I be caring for during the pandemic time? Can I only care for children of emergency workers?

Due to the nature of the pandemic, the answer to this question may change as new information and requirements are released. However, as of the date listed on the top of this guidance document:

Priority needs to be given to [emergency and essential workers](#), but child care centers can continue to provide care for all children.

The Executive Order expressly encouraged child care providers to remain open to provide child care services to the critical sectors during the Stay At Home order period. Our guidance encourages those open to provide care for children of all essential workers in the Governor's Stay at Home order.

There is nothing in the order that specifically prohibits a family from taking their child to child care and if a provider wants to continue taking these children, the Executive Order does not expressly prohibit that; however, this is not keeping with the overall message and spirit of the order and goal to keep child care providers open for emergency workers.

The governor has required that school districts provide emergency child care. Do I need to follow certification requirements when providing emergency child care?

If the certified center continues to operate, they need to follow certification requirements, including the modifications provided during the pandemic. The certified center can provide the emergency child care for the district.

As another option, the emergency child care program can be provided by the district and operate under an exclusion from licensure. In this case certification standards do not need to be followed and the district is responsible for setting the standards.

Can I use school district staff or other staff who are already a part of my organization in my certified programs during the pandemic?

If a paraprofessional, school district staff person, or person that is a part of a broader organization, but not a staff person of the certified center, that person can be used, however that person would be a staff person of the certified center and would need to meet all requirements or modifications to requirements that a staff person would.

If a paraprofessional, school district staff person, or person that is a part of a broader organization, but not a staff person of the certified center, wants to work as a volunteer or a parent approved provider, there are no modification to these requirements.

- Supervised at all times - If the individual does not have unsupervised access to the children, there would be no additional requirements.
- Unsupervised - If the individual does have unsupervised access to the children, the individual is an unsupervised volunteer and would need to meet all requirements for an unsupervised volunteer. However, since there are modifications to staff training requirements, the same modification would be allowed for an unsupervised volunteer who requires training.

Do I have to limit group sizes? What about limiting spaces to 10 or fewer children?

There is no modification to group size requirements. However, based on social distancing recommendations, keeping group sizes (children and adults) to less than 10 individuals is advised. If a center chooses to keep group sizes to less than 10 individuals, that does not mean that only 10 individuals can be in a room. If the space is large enough to separate into groups of 10 or fewer and respect social distancing recommendations, a center can have more than ten individuals in a room.

Can we take children to a playground?

Like other outdoor activities, going to a playground is allowed under the Stay Safe Order. Caregivers should be careful to ensure children wash hands after touching play structures and maintain six feet of space from other children as much as possible. Although the Governor's order doesn't close

playgrounds, they may be closed by local authorities.

If my certification is specific to serving only certain age categories, can I serve other age categories during the pandemic?

Any change need to be approved. Use the [Child Care Center Temporary Change Form](#) to submit the request to serve additional age categories. A licensor will evaluate the circumstances. As an example, the licensor will look at whether or not your current fire inspection approval supports the change. The licensor will contact you to discuss if and when you can serve additional age categories.

My program is located in a facility that would allow me to use additional areas that were not previously part of my certified child care space. Can I use that space?

Any change need to be approved. Use the [Child Care Center Temporary Change Form](#) to submit the request to use additional space. A licensor will evaluate the circumstances. As an example, the licensor will look at whether or not your current fire inspection approval supports the change. The licensor will contact you to discuss if and when you can use additional space.

How do I get training for staff if training is not available during the pandemic?

Centers can continue to provide training to their own staff. Some training is available online and can be used. A modification issued with the March 20, 2020, Commissioner's order already included giving extensions to training that is set to expire during the pandemic. Additionally, centers now have flexibility with first aid and CPR requirements to accommodate the lack of availability of training.

How have first aid and CPR training requirements been modified for certified centers?

The modified standards do not require first aid or CPR to be pediatric and they allow for first aid and CPR to have been completed in the last three years to accommodate training that would expire. Additionally, flexibility is provided by not requiring that every staff person has first aid and CPR training. One staff person who has first aid and CPR training needs to be present at all times when children are present.

Keep in mind, when this waiver expires at the end of the peacetime emergency, centers will need to ensure staff meet the requirements in place for certified centers prior to the pandemic. Therefore, it is recommended that certified child centers ensure staff who receive training during the pandemic, receive training in **pediatric** first aid and CPR, when possible.

Do I need to update my policies during the pandemic and train staff?

Yes, certified centers were required to have health and safety policies, reporting policies, a risk reduction plan, and a site specific emergency preparedness plan prior to the pandemic period. All policies are still required to be maintained and staff are required to be trained.

As part of the modifications during the pandemic period, certified centers must have staff review guidance from the [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) for child care providers on health and safety practices that prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a child care environment, and make decisions about their child care program in light of this guidance. If any policies are changed based on MDH and CDC guidance during the pandemic period, all staff must be trained on changes.

Do I need to contact my licensor if I am making changes to any of my policies or procedures due to MDH and CDC guidance?

No, the modifications to certification requirements released April 8, 2020, state that to the extent that MDH/CDC guidance is inconsistent with a licensing standard, centers are permitted to deviate from certification requirements to the extent necessary to follow the MDH/CDC guidance.

Certified centers should keep written records to show policy and procedure changes made in order to meet MDH and CDC guidelines. The written record should include the policy or procedure, the MDH/CDC guideline that conflicted with the policy or procedure, the change to the policy or procedure, and any notes about the change. Centers do not need to contact their licensor to get approval for a modification such as sanitizing procedures, equipment rotation, parental access, etc.

However, keep in mind any changes to the terms of your certification such as adding age categories served needs to be approved by your licensor.

What procedures should I follow to effectively screen children and exclude sick children during the pandemic?

The certified center must keep up-to-date with [MDH](#) and [CDC](#) guidance given to child care providers during the pandemic. Additionally, centers need to use this guidance and decide whether and how to adjust their operating procedures. As of the date listed on the top of this guidance document, the following information has been provided by MDH around screening and excluding sick children:

- MDH exclusion guidance:
<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>
- CDC screening guidance
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

How do I properly clean and disinfect my center during the pandemic?

The certified center must keep up-to-date with [MDH](#) and [CDC](#) guidance given to child care providers during the pandemic. Additionally, centers need to use this guidance and decide whether and how to adjust their operating procedures. As of the date listed on the top of this guidance document, the following information has been provided by CDC regarding disinfecting facilities:

- CDC recommendations for disinfecting facilities:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

What if a child’s immunizations need to be updated? Or what if I enroll a new child and cannot get an immunization record?

Due to the demand on the health care system and the safety of children, there is flexibility given to these requirements. Immunization records must be obtained within 30 days of the child’s first date of attendance.