

## **FAQs to accompany the Modification to Child Care Center Licensing 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.

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

Once the Governor lifts the peacetime emergency order, any program that was licensed before the pandemic, shall resume following all of the child care center licensing requirements in place prior to the pandemic as set forth in Minnesota Statutes, Chapters 245A and 245C, and Minnesota Rules, Chapter 9503.

### **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.

## **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.

## **I have my own outdoor activity area for children. Should I only have 10 or fewer children outside at once?**

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. We strongly recommend that centers with an outdoor activity area that is limited in size and not divided create a rotating schedule that allows the maximum group size of 10 to be followed. Centers with an outdoor activity area that is large enough or divided in a way that allows for social distancing and a maximum group size of 10 may choose to have more than 10 children outside at one time, as appropriate.

## **Can I mix children of different ages together?**

Yes, the temporary modification to standards allows child care centers to mix infant, toddler, preschool, and school age children as needed. There is no limit, such as 25 percent of the center's daily hours of operation during morning drop off and afternoon pick up time, when age groups can mix throughout the day. However, you must follow ratio and maximum group size for the youngest child present in the group.

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

Any change needs 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 licensed child care space. Can I use that space?**

Any change needs 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 and may need to conduct an inspection of the previously unlicensed space, using technology whenever possible. Also, 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.

## Can I increase my overall capacity or change the numbers of children I am approved to serve in one or more age category?

Any change needs to be approved. Use the [Child Care Center Temporary Change Form](#) to submit the request to increase or change your capacity. 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 change your capacity.

## 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.

## Can the first aid and CPR training be online? Does the first aid and CPR training need to be pediatric?

The modified standards allow first aid and CPR training to be done online during the peacetime emergency. The *hands on practice and in person observed skills assessment* for CPR training is not required with the modification. Additionally, the modified standards do not require first aid or CPR to be pediatric.

Keep in mind:

- The temporary standards require that one staff person who has first aid and CPR training is present at all times when children are present.
- Additionally, when this waiver expires at the end of the peacetime emergency, centers will need to ensure staff meet the requirements in place for licensed centers prior to the pandemic. Therefore, it is recommended that licensed child centers ensure staff receive training in **pediatric** first aid and CPR, and that the CPR training includes the hands on practice and in person observed skills assessment, when possible.

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

Yes, licensed centers were required to have policies 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, licensed 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 licensing 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 licensing requirements to the extent necessary to follow the MDH/CDC guidance.

Licensed 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 license such as adding age categories served, hours of operation, increasing capacity, changing space, etc. do need to be approved by your licensor.

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

The 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>
- MDH 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 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.