

Modification to Certified Child Care Center Requirements

The Commissioner of Human Services has temporarily modified certain requirements for child care providers, 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, the issuance of correction orders, and extended expired training timelines, modifications are necessary to provide flexibility to providers, mitigate the spread of the virus, and protect the health and safety of children and staff.

For certified child care centers, additional modification has been applied to first aid and CPR training, immunization records, and a new requirement to review guidance from the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) specific to child care settings has been imposed. These changes are effective April 9, 2020, until the conclusion of the peacetime emergency.

By releasing these changes to certification standards and practices, the Department of Human Services (DHS) is providing certified child care centers with more flexibility to operate in a pandemic and be able to focus on the most critical health and safety measures needed during this time. DHS recognizes that guidance from MDH and the CDC may point centers in a different direction than certification standards. If a center chooses to operate during the pandemic, the center should feel empowered to follow the specific guidance from MDH and the CDC, use their discretion in making the best decisions for their program and efforts to keep children and staff safe, and continue to use DHS-Licensing for technical assistance as needed.

The modifications of requirements for certified child care centers are as follows:

1. At least one staff person who has had first aid training and one staff person who has had CPR training in the last three years must be present at all times when children are present in the center. Online training and testing will be accepted during the peacetime emergency when necessary to meet this requirement if pediatric first aid and/or CPR training are not available. This change provides additional flexibility by permitting individuals to work with children before the training is completed.

This modification is in addition to the extension of training timelines for existing staff that expire during the peacetime emergency and cannot be met, as temporarily suspended by the Commissioner of Human Services previously on March 20, 2020.

2. Immunization records must be obtained within 30 days of child's first date of attendance. This provides additional flexibility for certified child care centers by giving them additional time to obtain immunization records which currently must be obtained by the child's first day of attendance.

3. The certified child care center must follow the minimum staff-to-child ratios and maximum group size limitations as specified in [Minnesota Statutes, 245H.08](#). However, based on recommendations from the Minnesota Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control to limit group activities and maintain social distancing, centers are strongly encouraged to limit group sizes to no more than ten people total, including children and adults. If a center chooses to keep group sizes to less than 10 individuals, it does not mean that only 10 individuals can be in a room. However, centers are encouraged to separate into groups of 10 or fewer and respect social distancing recommendations.
4. During this pandemic, child care providers face a rapidly changing situation which makes it challenging to remain in compliance with all of the usual licensing standards. The child care center must have staff review guidance from the [Minnesota Department of Health](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control](#) for child care providers on health and safety practices that prevent the spread of COVID-19 in a child care environment, and make decisions based on their particular child care program in light of this guidance. This is an ongoing requirement, as the guidance will evolve as the understanding of the COVID-19 virus and how to prevent it evolves. DHS will communicate current guidance and any updated guidance to providers via email and on the [DHS website](#).
5. To the extent that [MDH/CDC guidance](#) is inconsistent with a certification standard, centers are permitted to deviate from certification requirements to the extent necessary to follow the MDH/CDC guidance. Centers must document any changes they make to policies or programming. For example, a center may deviate from their current policy to allow parents to visit the center at any time by requiring parents to remain in the entryway at drop off time rather than walking their children to their classroom to minimize the risk of spreading the virus.

In addition to the links above, you may find it helpful to review www.mn.gov/childcare for more COVID-19 child care information and resources.