COVID-19 questions from 12/13/21 child care webinars

Over 800 child care providers and staff attended the webinars that the Minnesota Departments of Health (MDH), Human Services (DHS), Education (MDE), and the Children’s Cabinet hosted on December 13, 2021. Below you will find the information and links that were shared during the webinars. The changing nature of the pandemic and the unique circumstances of each situation make it difficult to broadly address certain specific questions. If you have any COVID-19-related questions that are not addressed below, please do not hesitate to contact MDH at health.schools.COVID19@state.mn.us. For other questions, please contact your licensor.

DHS will host additional COVID-19 webinars for child care providers, as the situation warrants.

MDH

Close contact and quarantine

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated quarantine guidance on January 4, 2022. Once MDH has reviewed the guidance from the CDC, they will update their materials and provide more information for the public and partners.

Close contact: someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person (laboratory-confirmed) for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period (for example, three individual five-minute exposures for a total of 15 minutes).

For the most up-to-date MDH guidance, please review: https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/close.html

Confirmed cases and isolation

Best Practices for Handling a Confirmed Case of COVID-19
(https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/casehandle.pdf)

Decision tree

You are not required to use the decision tree, however, MDH encourages you to use the decision tree as a tool to help you determine when children should attend child care related to COVID-19. https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf

If after following the tool, you still have questions you can reach out to MDH at: health.schools.COVID19@state.mn.us.
Reporting positive cases

You are required to report if you, the children in your program, or your staff test positive for COVID-19. For family child care providers, this includes the provider’s household members.

Please do not report positive cases for parents of children enrolled in your program.

MDH needs you to complete an on-line survey tool. MDH does not take email or verbal reports.

https://redcap.health.state.mn.us/redcap/surveys/?s=AD9CT3P3NNFY4A4E

In the survey tool, if you have questions, need help with timelines, etc. you have the option to request that someone from MDH connect with you. If you would like someone to follow up with you, please answer “YES” to the question, “Would you like someone from MDH’s K12 School/Childcare/Youth Programming team to contact you about this report?”

Exclusion of children with illnesses other than COVID-19

You should be following your program guidelines related to children who have illnesses other than COVID-19.

COVID-19, RSV, influenza and the common cold all look the same. Medical providers can test for COVID-19, RSV and influenza. We acknowledge that the similar symptoms can be difficult for programs who are trying to balance quarantine and isolation measures and parents’ needs for child care.

Many child care programs have and continue to use the Hennepin County Infectious Disease Manual to help guide their decision making regarding excluding sick children. This is an optional resource that you may find to be helpful: https://www.hennepin.us/childcaremanual

DHS Licensing

Requirement to follow MDH/DHS guidance

Licensed child care providers are required to follow three areas of MDH/CDC guidance which includes:

- Reporting each child or staff member who receives a positive COVID test result to MDH,
- Notifying parents/guardians when their child is identified as a close contact of someone who tested positive, and
- Following exclusion guidelines for children and staff who test positive.

Child care license holders are no longer required to quarantine children and staff who are close contacts with a positive COVID-19 case as part of licensing requirements.
Additional considerations for COVID-19 prevention

As independent businesses, you are able to make decisions for your particular program in light of MDH/CDC guidance, which may include testing. It is not a licensing requirement to retain the test results. You are also able to develop additional policies/practices that align with other mitigation strategies as recommended by MDH/CDC that go above and beyond the three areas that are currently required by licensing. For example, you may choose to require individuals to wash their hands when entering your program or require masking for anyone over the age of 2.

Face coverings

The CDC recently updated its quarantine guidance, which included changes to masking recommendations for people with COVID-19. MDH will review the updated guidance and update their materials as needed.

There is no licensing requirement for child care providers, staff, or children to wear face coverings. However, MDH and the CDC continue to recommend that everyone over the age of 2 who is not fully vaccinated wear a mask indoors as a prevention strategy.


Child care requirements and school requirements

DHS has authority to require licensed child care programs to follow state and local guidance in response to a pandemic outbreak. MDE does not have authority to require schools to require isolation and quarantine. Without a Peacetime Emergency, local school districts and charters hold the authority and enforcement of public health guidance, including isolation and quarantine, which may be different from MDH guidelines.

DHS Child Development Services

Child Care Stabilization Grant Program

Child Care Stabilization Base Grant information and the FAQ are available on the Minnesota Child Care Stabilization webpage: https://mn.gov/dhs/partners-and-providers/grants-rfps/child-care-stabilization/. This webpage contains general information, answers to frequently asked questions (FAQs), and other resources to aid both applicants and recipients in applying for and using grant funds.

If you have questions and are not able to find the answers in the FAQ, please call Child Care Aware at 651-290-9704 or email supportfunds@childcareawaremn.org.

New funding to support child care programs was announced after the December provider calls. These funds are a result of ongoing communication with and feedback from child care providers and were prioritized to
assist providers who are experiencing the impacts of lost revenue and increased costs associated with temporary classroom quarantines, pandemic-related worker vacancies, and staffing limitations, among other needs. Twenty million dollars have been allocated to support your programs as you experience the recent surge in COVID-19 cases and to help you continue operating for families. DHS plans for providers to apply for and receive these funds, called One-Time Supplemental Stabilization Grants, through the January Child Care Stabilization Base Grant application and payment distribution. Please look for emails with more information about this new support along with information about new Child Care Stabilization Financial Hardship Grants.