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STATE OF CONNECTICUT

OFFICE OF EARLY CHILDHOOD



Beth Bye
Commissioner

DATE: March 16, 2020 **REVISED April 20, 2020**

TO: Providers of Services to Young Children

FROM: Beth Bye, Commissioner

RE: **Conoravirus Memo #6 REVISED**
Message from the State of Connecticut regarding Child Care

The Office of Early Childhood is in close communication with the Governor, the Department of Public Health (DPH) and the state's Emergency Operation Center. This situation continues to evolve and we will continue to monitor closely and communicate with you again soon.

1. Child care is a critical part of the public health emergency response. It is particularly important to ensure that public safety workers are able to work, healthcare workers are able to care for the sick (including those with coronavirus), and other workers can continue vital services in society, such as pharmacies and food stores.
2. It takes a village! Families may consider first identifying trusted friends, neighbors, and family members to care for your child if you must go to work. Ask those individuals:
 1. In the past 14 days, have you had contact with any persons who were sick with suspected COVID-19 or tested positive for COVID-19?
 2. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g. cough, sore throat, fever or shortness of breath)?
4. Be a good neighbor! Inform your child care provider if your child will not be attending care. This will open up spaces for essential workers in your community who need child care.
5. For people who are unable to secure a backup child care plan, call 2-1-1 to identify open and available spaces for care near your work or home.

Families and staff need to be vigilant in implementing health care practices to prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These practices include frequent handwashing, covering their mouth with their sleeve or a tissue when coughing or sneezing, avoiding touching their eyes, nose or mouth with their hands and most importantly staying home when they are sick.

The CDC website includes links to tip sheets, posters on handwashing, and tips for families in its

[Interim Guidance for Administrators of US ChildCare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease](#). The CDC posted new guidance for [child care that remains open](#) to serve essential workers and OEC has incorporated it below for reference as programs determine their ability to serve essential workers. All CDC guidance is updated as necessary to respond to this changing situation and child care providers should revisit this source frequently.

Child care facilities must implement control measures to reduce the risk of spreading any infectious disease. The following **requirements** must be included in a program's plan for operating during this public health emergency:

1. With regard to health screening:

All staff and children are required to be screened for any observable illness, including cough or respiratory distress, and to confirm temperature below 100 degrees Fahrenheit. Screening includes assessing health by taking temperature.

- **Programs may ask parents to take the child's temperature upon arrival.**
- Disinfection of the thermometer should be incorporated into the screening procedures.

When conducting screening, the child care facility should consider the following.

- The health screener does not need to wear personal protective equipment (PPE) if a distance of 6 feet is maintained while performing this action.
 - Maintain sufficient distance, or a physical barrier, between the health screener and the child or staff member being screened.
 - If social distancing or barrier/partition controls cannot be implemented during screening, personal protective equipment (PPE) can be used when within 6 feet of a child. However, reliance on PPE alone is a less effective control and more difficult to implement, given PPE shortages and training requirements.
2. Staff or children who have a temperature greater than 100 degrees are not permitted into the program per [Executive Order 7Q](#).
 3. Limit group size to no more than 10 children, and obtain required permission from OEC to serve more than 30 children per [Memo #15, Reduced Group Size and Enhanced Health Procedures for Child Care Programs During COVID-19 Emergency](#).
 4. Identify, per licensing requirements, a plan for a child or children with an elevated temperature or who may be ill, i.e. a "sick room."
 5. Comply with the requirements listed in the [Department of Economic Development Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employees](#) per Executive Order 7V.
 6. Use of cloth face covering for each employee at all times while in the workplace as directed by the [Department of Economic Development Safe Workplace Rules for Essential Employees](#) per [Executive Order 7BB](#). Instructions for [use of cloth face covering](#) are available from the CDC. Executive Order 7BB does not require the use of face masks by:
 - anyone for whom doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition;
 - a child in a child care setting;

- anyone under the age of 2 years, or an older child if the parent, guardian or person responsible for the child is unable to place the mask safely on the child's face.
7. Implement hand hygiene:
 - Reinforce to staff and children, regular hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds should be done:
 1. Before coming in contact with any child;
 2. Before and after eating;
 3. After sneezing, coughing or nose blowing;
 4. After using the rest room;
 5. Before handling food;
 6. After touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; and
 7. After using any shared equipment like toys, computer keyboards, mouse.
 8. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol based hand sanitizer. Use of alcohol based hand sanitizers should always be supervised by adults.
 9. Implement respiratory hygiene:
 - All staff: cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of the elbow;
 - Encourage children, when appropriate to cover coughs and sneezes with tissues or the corner of the elbow; and
 - Dispose of soiled tissues immediately after use.
 10. Develop protocols for intensified cleaning and disinfection.
 11. Implement appropriate social distancing strategies. Social distancing is required, and may take many forms as outlined by CDC with a dedicated section for "social distancing strategies" in its [guidance for child care programs that remain open](#).
 12. If a child or staff member who has been present in the program is diagnosed with COVID-19, the child care provider must notify families and staff of the child care program about the exposure.

In February 2020, COVID-19 was added to the List of Reportable Diseases. **Those required to report such diseases must report cases of COVID-19 infection immediately to the Connecticut Department of Public Health and to the local department of health in the town of residence of the case-patient by telephone on the day of recognition or strong suspicion of the disease.** The COVID-19 report form is available on the DPH website at <https://dphsubmissions.ct.gov/Covid/InitiateCovidReport>

Additional practices to those below may be recommended to the provider in consultation with the local health department or the CT Department of Public Health.

- Contact your local health department of the CT Department of Public Health.
- Determine the date of symptom onset for the child/staff member.
- Determine if the child/staff member attended/worked at the program while symptomatic or during the two days before symptoms began.
- Identify what days the child/staff member attended/worked during that time.
- Determine who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days (staff and other children)

- Exclude the children and staff members who are determined to have had close contact with the affected child/staff member for 14 days after the last day they had contact with the affected child/staff member.
- Conduct appropriate cleaning and disinfection:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
 - Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before cleaning or disinfecting to allow respiratory droplets to settle before cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
 - If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.

Depending on the size of the program and the number of people affected, closure of a particular room in the program (for larger centers) or the entire program might need to be considered.

Specific situations and exposures can be discussed with the local health department or the Department of Public Health (860.509.7994).

We thank you all for your continued support and commitment to children and families in CT.