



Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) Alameda County Public Health Department Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) for Childcare Programs: August 4, 2020

This FAQ provides guidance and orders for childcare, including **family childcare programs, daycare, preschools, and before and after school care**. These FAQ's are specific to Alameda County and do not include everything you may need to know to run your childcare program during this COVID-19 pandemic. Links to more detailed guidance are provided at the end of this document.

This Document Answers These Questions:

- 1) **What is COVID-19?**
- 2) **How does the Alameda County Health Officer Shelter in Place Order affect childcare?**
- 3) **What does physical distancing mean?**
- 4) **What are face coverings, and who needs to wear them?**
- 5) **What types of cleaning and sanitizing are needed?**
- 6) **What do we need to know about health screenings?**
- 7) **What do we do when there is a Confirmed positive COVID-19 Case in the Childcare Program?**

1. What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a new virus, and we are learning more about it every day. As of now, there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent getting sick is to minimize exposure to the virus. Reducing the spread of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy. More information on COVID-19 is available at www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov

Symptoms of COVID-19 include the following:

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

More information on symptoms is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>



2. How does the Alameda County Health Officer Shelter in Place Order affect childcare?

The Alameda County Health Officer issued two Health Officer Orders on June 5, 2020 (revised July 19, 2020), and shared the [County's Reopening Plan](#), which shows the allowed activities in the coming weeks and months.

How does the Shelter in Place (SIP) Order impact my childcare (childcare center, preschool, family childcare home) facility?

- Classes and activities must be carried out in stable groups of 12 or fewer children, and an appropriate number of supervising adults ("stable" means that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day). This stable group is also referred to as a bubble.
- Children shall not change from one group to another. The stable group or bubble should remain the same for at least three weeks, if possible. In other words, children should not change groups from week to week.
- If more than one group of children is at one facility, each group shall be in a separate room. Groups shall not mix.
- Providers or educators shall remain solely with one group of children.
- All businesses (e.g. a childcare program that serves the public) are required to complete a re-opening plan. Refer to [COVID-19 Site-Specific Protection Plan Guidance & Template for Developing Your Own Plan](#).

What if one of my families has their child in my childcare program part-time and at another childcare program part-time? (e.g., at my program in the morning and program X in the afternoon)

People/families may only be in one Social Bubble and one childcare or extracurricular activity at the same time. **In other words, they should ONLY attend your childcare program and not participate in another activity like a dance class or sports team or enroll in another childcare program.**

Why are stable groups or bubbles in childcare important?

As our County's Shelter in Place (SIP) loosens and children leave their homes, the idea is to enter childcare with the least exposure to the smallest number of people as possible. To limit exposure among children in childcare settings, the Public Health Department is recommending that children stay with a stable group or bubble of 12 children and the same staff. The stable group or bubble will help in reducing transmission and in addressing those exposed to a positive case (i.e., contact tracing).



Can the Childcare Center Director, substitute teacher, or support staff, such as a janitor, visit the classroom? In other words, are floaters and substitutes allowed?

Yes, if you make every effort to use the same staff/floaters and be sure to health screen these staff before they enter the classroom and program. Make sure all staff are wearing face coverings and maintain physical distance from others in the classroom when possible.

3. What does physical distancing mean?

Physical distancing refers to increasing the space between people to avoid spreading illness. A distance of at least six feet is needed between people to prevent the spread of COVID-19. More physical distancing recommendations from the California Department of Public Health is available here:

- The California Departments of Public Health and Social Services Community Care Licensing Division and the State of California Department of Industrial Relations: [COVID-19 Updated Guidance: Child Care Programs and Providers](#)

Can we use partitions to separate our classroom spaces?

Facilities that have large rooms can organize the space to practice proper distancing for the groups. This can include using dividers, bookshelves, and staggering activities, as well as using outdoor classrooms. Try to have 10-12 feet of space between groups in large areas. Proper airflow is essential, as is having access to fresh air. Opening windows is highly recommended.

Do children have to stay 6 feet away from others when they are in their bubble/group?

No, they do not have to stay six feet apart from the other children in their stable group/bubble. The stable group helps children and staff stay safe since they are not always able to physical distance from one another. When children remain in a stable group, it prevents the co-mingling of too many people and helps decrease the possibility of the virus spreading.

Can children from different bubbles/groups share the same bathroom?

Yes, children can share the same bathroom from different stable groups or bubbles. Try to stagger times when bubble groups visit the bathroom. If children from different groups are using the bathroom at the same time, try to limit the number so that they can stay 6 feet away from each other.



4. What are face coverings and who needs to wear them?

What is a face covering?

A face covering is a covering made of cloth, fabric, or other soft, breathable material that covers the nose and mouth and other areas of the lower face. It may NOT have holes or valves. A covering that hides or covers the wearer's eyes or forehead is not a Face Covering.

Examples of face coverings include:

- Scarfs and bandanas
- Neck gaiters
- Homemade coverings made from a t-shirt, sweatshirt, or towel, held on with rubber bands or other straps
- Masks, which need not be medical grade

A face covering may be factory-made or may be handmade from materials you have at home. The face covering should be comfortable, so that the wearer can breathe through the nose and does not have to adjust it often.

Do the children and staff in my childcare need to wear a face covering?

Staff are required to wear face coverings, and children in childcare are strongly encouraged to wear [face coverings](#) unless they cannot tolerate wearing one. The use of face coverings in children under the age of 12 must be subject to adult supervision. **Never place face coverings on babies or children under two because of the danger of suffocation**

How do I wash my face covering?

Face coverings should be washed often with detergent and hot water and dried on a hot cycle. If you can, wash your face covering after each use, and have a dedicated laundry bag or bin. Make sure the covering is comfortable. You do not want to have to keep adjusting the mask, which means touching your face. Always wash your hands, or use hand sanitizer before AND after touching your face or face coverings.

5. Face Shields

The CDC states that "It is not known if [face shields](#) provide any benefit as source control to protect others from the spray of respiratory particles. CDC does not recommend the use of face shields for everyday activities or as a substitute for cloth face coverings. Some people may choose to use a face shield when sustained close contact with other people is expected. If face shields are used without a mask, they should wrap around the sides of the wearer's face and extend to below the chin. Disposable face shields should only be worn for a single-use. Reusable face shields should be cleaned and disinfected after each use. **Plastic face shields for newborns and infants are NOT recommended**"



6. Domestic Travel

The Alameda County Shelter in Place Order prohibits non-essential travel. Please see the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control regarding domestic travel for your staff: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-in-the-us.html>

7. What cleaning and sanitizing are needed?

Please see cleaning recommendations from the California Departments of Public Health and Social Services Community Care Licensing Division and the State of California Department of Industrial Relations: [COVID-19 Updated Guidance: Child Care Programs and Providers](#)

What are recommended practices for cleaning and sanitizing toys?

- Toys that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Toys that children have placed in their mouths or that encountered body secretion or excretion should be set aside until they are cleaned by hand by a person wearing gloves.
- Clean with water and detergent, rinse, sanitize with an EPA-registered disinfectant and air-dry or clean in a mechanical dishwasher. Be mindful of items more likely to be placed in a child's mouth, like play food, dishes, and utensils.
- Machine washable cloth toys should be used by one person at a time or should not be used at all. These toys should be laundered before being used by another child.
- Do not share toys with other groups of children or between individual children, unless they are washed and sanitized before being moved from one group to the other or being shared between children.
- Set aside toys that need to be cleaned. Place in a dishpan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for "soiled toys." Keep dishpan and water out of reach from children to prevent the risk of drowning. Washing with soapy water is the best way to clean toys. Try to have enough toys so that the toys can be rotated through cleanings.
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials such as mail or envelopes, do not have a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures.
- Recommendations adapted from [Caring for Our Children](#).

Can children share toys with other children in their bubbles?

- It is difficult to limit sharing between children. It is ok for children in their stable group or bubble to share toys if they are not mouthing the toys. If children do mouth toys, place in a dishpan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for "soiled toys."



8. What do we need to know about health screenings?

All children and staff must be screened daily before entering the program.

- If a staff member or child shows signs of respiratory illness (a new cough, complaints of sore throat, or shortness of breath), or a fever of 100°F or above, they should enter a separate room and be sent home as soon as possible.
- Seek medical care immediately if symptoms, such as a high fever or difficulty breathing, become more severe.

For more detailed Alameda County screening guidance visit the links below:

- Health screening for staff: [COVID-19 Screening Guidance for Businesses and Organizations](#)
- [Self COVID-19 Self-Assessment for \(Employees, Contractors, Volunteers\) Guidance](#)
- [ACPHD COVID-19 Guidance: Health Screening at Programs for Children and Youth](#)
- [Parents and Guardians: COVID-19 Health Screening at Childcare Programs and Summer Day Camps](#)

What do I do when a child gets sick in my childcare?

If a child or staff member becomes ill during the day with fever (100 degrees or higher), dry cough, fatigue, extreme fussiness, or shortness of breath, isolate them, and notify their family to pick them up right away. You may apply a mask to staff and children over two years old. Always supervise ill children.

Can children/staff come to school if they are coughing but do not have a fever?

If a child or a staff member has a *new* cough, they should not come to school even if they have no fever. It is not uncommon for people, including children, with COVID-19, to have a cough without fever, especially early in the course of illness.

When is it safe for ill children or staff to return to work or the childcare program?

Ill children or staff should not return to work or childcare until they have met all three criteria:

1. At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared and
2. There have been at least 24 hours with no fever, without taking medicines to lower a fever, like acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) and
3. Respiratory symptoms (cough, shortness of breath), if present, have been improving for at least 24 hours.

Please see [ACPHD COVID-19 Guidance: Health Screening at Programs for Children and Youth](#) for more detailed information regarding when ill children and staff should return to work or childcare.



9. What do we do when there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in our childcare program?

What process should we follow when there is a confirmed positive COVID-19 case in our childcare program?

If you are made aware of a confirmed COVID-19 case among your staff or students, contact the ACPHD COVID Workplace Team at covidworkplace@acgov.org or call (510) 268-2101

1. ACPHD will work with the childcare program to determine the next steps, including whether an extended dismissal is needed to stop or slow the further spread of COVID-19.
2. Childcare program administrators or owners will be asked to help identify adults or children who may have had close contact within **6 feet of the ill individual for more than 15 minutes during the time period between two days before when the individual's symptoms appeared, and the last time the sick child or staff attended the childcare facility.** Regardless of how long the facility remains closed, close contacts should home-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact. If any of them develop a fever, cough, or shortness of breath while in quarantine, they should isolate for 10 days and contact their health care provider and follow the return to work/childcare program guidance outlined in the [ACPHD COVID-19 Guidance: Health Screening at Programs for Children and Youth](#).

For more information about Isolation and Quarantine: please see the [ACPHD Isolation and Quarantine FAQ](#)

3. If you plan to communicate this information with your childcare community, be mindful of:
 - Confidentiality when releasing details about the case. Balancing that with transparency is critical.
 - Avoiding messages that stigmatize a site or group of people.

What do I do while a teacher or a child is waiting for the results of a COVID-19 test?

While waiting for a COVID-19 test result, the individual being tested should quarantine at home.



Additional Resources and Information:

Alameda County Resources

Local Resource and Referral Agencies

BANANAS (Northern Alameda County): 510-658-0381 referrals@bananasbunch.org

4Cs (Southern Alameda County): 510-582-2182 ext. 3198 info@4c-alameda.org Hively

(Eastern Alameda County): 925-417-8733 hello@behively.org

First 5 Alameda County

<http://www.first5alameda.org/coronavirus-disease-covid-19-resources-2019/ece-provider-resources/>

Alameda County Early Care and Education Planning Council

<https://www.acgov.org/ece/>

State of California Guidance

California Departments of Public Health and Social Services Community Care Licensing Division and the State of California Department of Industrial Relations COVID-19 Updated Guidance: Child Care Programs and Providers

<https://covid19.ca.gov/pdf/guidance-childcare.pdf>

California Department of Human Services: Early Learning and Care Playbook

<https://californiaall.org/providers>

Federal Guidance

Centers for Disease Control: Guidance for Childcare Programs that Remain Open

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

Other

Childcare Law Center

<https://www.childcarelaw.org/>

For more information, please contact Lisa Erickson, Alameda County Public Health at

lisa.erickson@acgov.org