



COVID-19 Health Screening in Child Care Programs

January 15th, 2021

Updates are in red

This document was developed by the Alameda County Public Health Department (ACPHD) in alignment with [guidance](#) from the California Department of Public Health. This document will be updated as knowledge, spread of COVID-19, and availability of testing changes.

Child care programs **must** screen children for exposure to and symptoms of COVID-19 every day before allowing them to enter the program or building. Screening is essential for limiting the spread of COVID-19 among children and child care staff.

This document will describe:

1. The screening process, **and**
2. The criteria that must be met before a child can return to child care after experiencing symptoms of COVID-19 or a positive test.

A. Health Screening: What to Do

| |
|--|
| The health screening has three parts: |
| (1) Exposure Check |
| (2) Symptom Check & Visual Check |
| (3) Temperature Check |

A sample of the **COVID-19 Health Screening Sheet for Child Care Programs** is included at the end of this document in Appendix A.

Programs may have parents or guardians answer **Exposure** and **Symptom** questions and take a child's **Temperature** at home. Please refer to **Appendix A** for Sample Questions for Children. This information must be sent to the program before the child arrives on the day of attendance. This information can be submitted by:

- E-mail
- App
- In an online form, or other forms of communication.

Please note that programs must still do a visual check when the child arrives.



If the answer to either question is **YES**, make sure the child meets the required criteria for returning to child care (see section B, page 4).

Before beginning the health screening, ask two important questions:

- 1. In the past 10 days, was the child sent home sick or absent due to illness?**
- 2. In the past 10 days, was the child diagnosed with COVID-19 or did the child have a test confirming that they had the virus?**

1) CHILD EXPOSURE CHECK

The parent or guardian should answer the following questions:

1. Within the past 14 days, has the child had close contact with anyone **in the household** who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus?
2. Within the last 14 days, has the child had **close contact with someone outside the household** who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus?

Clarification for Questions One and Two Above:

- Answer **“yes”** only if this exposure occurred within 10 days of the onset of symptoms, or within 10 days of a positive test. This is the time when the COVID positive person might have been infectious and should have been in isolation.
- **Close contact** means that the child was within **6 feet of a COVID positive person for 15 minutes or longer** (this includes multiple shorter periods in the same day that add up to 15 minutes) **EVEN IF** both the child and the other person were wearing masks. **Close contact** can also mean that the child had a briefer but major exposure to the COVID positive person’s respiratory droplets. For example, the sick person coughed directly on the child.



If the parent or guardian answers YES to one or both questions, then ask if this exposure was more than 10 days ago?

- **If the parent or guardian answered NO that the exposure was not more than 10 days ago, then send the child home.**
- **If the parent or guardian answered YES that the exposure was more than 10 days ago, then the child may continue to attend Child Care, but with the following conditions:**
 - **Note that a quarantine period of 10 days is the minimum required by the County; however, 14 days of quarantine is still the safest option. Therefore, children ending quarantine before 14 days should adhere strictly to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including always wearing face coverings, maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others, and monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms through Day 14.**
 - **Also note that if the child has regular close contact with anyone at high risk for severe disease, then 14 days of quarantine is required. Quarantine instructions from ACPHD can be viewed here.**

2) SYMPTOM CHECK + VISUAL CHECK

Ask the parent or guardian the following question:

Since the child was last at child care (or in the last 10 days if the child has been out of child care longer than 10 days), has the child had any of these symptoms, **new** or **different** from what they usually have or not explained by another reason (i.e. pre-existing diagnosis)?

- 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
- Seems sick or like they are starting to get sick



Perform a visual check: The visual check has no specific requirements. It allows a program to send a child home if they look sick when they arrive, even if the parent says the child has no symptoms.

| |
|---|
| Look at the child for signs of: |
| <input type="radio"/> Illness like a cough |
| <input type="radio"/> Fatigue |
| <input type="radio"/> Extreme fussiness or irritability |
| <input type="radio"/> Difficulty breathing |

If the parent or guardian answers “yes” to any of the above symptoms or the child looks sick, send them home.

3) TEMPERATURE CHECK

When checking for fever with a “non-touch” thermometer, Alameda County defines a fever as a temperature of **100°F (37.8°C) or higher.**

If the parent did not check and report the child’s temperature before the child arrives, then the program should take the child’s temperature with a “non-touch” thermometer. The screener should wear a mask and **EITHER** wear a face shield **OR** keep their face behind a plexiglass partition. Temperatures that are below 96°F (35.6°C) should be rechecked to ensure the reading is accurate.

If the child has a fever as defined above, send them home.

For Touch-Method Thermometers

If a thermometer requiring a touch-method (e.g. under the tongue or on the forehead) is the only type available, then it should only be used when a fever is suspected. These thermometers must be properly cleaned and disinfected after each use. The screener **should**:

1. Wear a new pair of disposable latex-free gloves for each temperature check with a touch thermometer.
2. Perform hand hygiene before putting on **AND** after removing and disposing of the gloves.

For more detailed guidance on safely checking temperatures, refer to COVID-19 Screening Guidance for Businesses and Organizations [here](#).



B. Requirements for Returning to Child Care

For children who were excluded because of symptoms:

| Scenario | Requirement |
|--|--|
| <p>1. If (1) the child’s COVID-19 test is positive OR (2) the child is NOT tested and has NO medical evaluation the child may return after:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared, AND • There have been at least 24 hours with no fever, without the aid of taking medicines to lower the fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), AND • Other symptoms, such as cough or shortness of breath, are improving. <p>Please note: A note from a doctor or clinic is not needed. For more information please view the County’s Quarantine FAQ here and the County’s Isolation infographic here.</p> |
| <p>2. If a child is NOT tested but has a medical evaluation, they may return before 10 days have passed if:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Symptoms have resolved, AND • A medical evaluator (a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a certified physician assistant) provides a letter indicating that (1) an alternative diagnosis has been made and (2) the child’s symptoms are NOT due to COVID-19. For privacy reasons, the program is not allowed to require disclosure of the alternative diagnosis. <p>Please note: Sometimes a child’s symptoms are clearly due to another cause, such as strep throat or hand-foot-and-mouth disease. In this situation, the provider may clear a child to return to child care. This does not mean the child does not have COVID-19. Many children with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms. An alternative diagnosis only means that a cause other than COVID-19 was found for symptoms that kept the child from attending the program.</p> |



| | |
|---|---|
| <p>3. If the child’s COVID-19 test is negative, and the parents or guardians want the child to return to the program before the 10 days of isolation have passed, the child may return if:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The child is feeling better (symptoms do not have to be completely resolved), AND • There have been at least 24 hours with no fever, without the aid of taking medicines to lower a fever, such as acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin), AND • The child consults a medical evaluator (a doctor, a nurse practitioner, or a certified physician assistant) to determine the significance of their symptoms. The medical evaluator will need to provide a letter indicating that (1) the child’s symptoms are NOT due to COVID- 19, AND (2) the COVID-19 test was negative (the program is <u>not allowed</u> to require disclosure of the alternative diagnosis), BUT • If it is not possible for the parent or guardian to consult a medical evaluator, they must obtain a COVID-19 negative test result indicating that a molecular test or a PCR was performed. |
| <p>4. For children without symptoms, who were excluded because of exposure to an actual or possible COVID-19 case:</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the child was excluded from a program due to close contact with or household exposure to a COVID positive person, the child may return after at least 10 days of quarantine following the last household contact or close contact with that person, if the child does not develop symptoms. If the child |



| | |
|--|--|
| | <p>develops symptoms of COVID-19 during quarantine, a COVID-19 test should be obtained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Note that though a quarantine period of 10 days is the minimum required, 14 days of quarantine is still the safest option. Furthermore, all individuals ending quarantine before Day 14 should adhere strictly to all recommended non-pharmaceutical interventions, including wearing a face covering at all times, maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from others, and self-monitoring for COVID-19 symptoms through Day 14.• Also note that if the child has regular close contact with anyone at <u>high risk for severe disease</u>, then 14 days of quarantine is required. For more information, please view the County's Quarantine FAQ here and the County's Isolation infographic here. |
|--|--|



What to do when a child must be sent home

| |
|---|
| 1. Tell the parent or guardian that the child cannot attend the program that day. |
| 2. Instruct them to contact their regular doctor or clinic and to consider a COVID-19 test if appropriate. |
| 3. Give the parent or guardian the parent handout on COVID-19 health screening. The parent handout lists the criteria required for the child to return to child care and has instructions on how to get tested. |
| 4. Remind the parent that the child should stay at home until they meet the criteria to return to the program. |

Frequently Asked Questions

What if a parent is unsure whether to answer “Yes” to the symptom question?

Ask the parent to focus on whether the symptom is **NEW** and/or **DIFFERENT** from the child’s usual illness, or if the symptoms are **UNEXPLAINED**. Encourage the parent to trust their intuition. Here is an example:

The child has asthma. They often cough from exercise or allergies.

- Is the child’s cough worse than usual or sound unlike it usually does? **NO**, then this is not a new or different symptom.
- Is the child’s cough worse than usual or sound unlike it usually does? **YES**, then this cough **is** a new or different symptom.

What if a parent says they **CANNOT** get a test for the child?

Ask families if they have tried the options below:

- Families who have a health care provider, or have an insurance plan or health coverage, should contact their provider or health plan about testing.
- For questions about testing and to see a list of known COVID-19 testing locations in Alameda County, click [here](#).



Appendix A: Sample Questions for Children

| Sample Questions | YES | NO |
|---|------------|-----------|
| (1) In the past 10 days, was the child sent home sick or absent due to illness? | | |
| (2) In the past 10 days, was the child diagnosed with COVID-19 or did the child have a test confirming that they had the virus? | | |
| If the answer to either question is YES, make sure the child meets the required criteria for returning to the program. | | |
| (3) Within the past 14 days, has the child had close contact with anyone in the household who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus? | | |
| (4) Within the last 14 days, has the child had close contact with someone outside the household who was diagnosed with COVID-19 or who had a test confirming they have the virus? | | |
| <p><i>IF YES to Question 3 or 4 → Child CANNOT attend the program</i></p> <p><i>IF NO to Questions 3 & 4 → Answer Below Questions</i></p> | | |
| Does the Child have any of the following: | YES | NO |
| (5) Fever or chills | | |
| (6) Cough | | |
| (7) Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | | |
| (8) Fatigue | | |
| (9) Muscle or body aches | | |
| (10) Headache | | |
| (11) New loss of taste or smell | | |
| (12) Sore throat | | |
| (13) Congestion or runny nose | | |
| (14) Nausea or vomiting | | |
| (15) Diarrhea | | |
| (16) Seems sick or like they are starting to get sick? | | |
| <p><i>IF YES to ANY of the above questions → Child CANNOT attend the program</i></p> <p><i>IF NO to ALL above questions → Take the Child's TEMPERATURE</i></p> | | |
| Take the Child's Temperature | YES | NO |



Alameda County Health Care Services Agency
Public Health Department
www.acphd.org

Colleen Chawla, Director
Kimi Watkins-Tartt, Director
Nicholas Moss, MD, Health Officer

Public Health Department: Main Line (510) 267-8000

COVID-19 Information: (510) 268-2101

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| (17) Is the Child's Temperature 100.0°F (37.8°C) or higher? | | |
| <p><i>IF YES, Temperature is 100.0°F or higher → Child CANNOT attend the program</i> <i>IF NO, Temperature is not 100.0°F or higher → Child CAN attend</i></p> | | |