



COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Programs

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations are rising again in New York City and around the U.S., largely due to increases in the more contagious delta variant and the large number of people who are still unvaccinated. As a child care provider, you have an important role in helping children, staff and their families protect themselves from COVID-19. While New York State (NYS) no longer requires child care centers to implement COVID-19 risk restriction measures, the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene recommends that programs continue these key practices to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Note that programs located in schools, and those supporting in-person Early Intervention (EI) service delivery, are still subject to NYS COVID-19 risk reduction [requirements](#).

The best way to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 is to get vaccinated. Learn about the [COVID-19 vaccines](#), share this information with staff and families, and encourage them to get vaccinated.

Combining these measures provides layers of protection for children and adults who are not yet vaccinated or are unable to get vaccinated:

Physical Distancing

- Child drop-off and pick-up procedures should allow for physical distancing between parents or guardians, and program staff and participants.
- Limit visitors and in-person events, such as fairs and parties, as much as possible. If you do have events, have them outdoors if possible.
- Maximize physical distance during meal service as much as possible.
- Keep children and staff in cohorts, as much as possible.
- Limit physical activities that encourage physical closeness.

Masks

- Masks should be worn by adults, including staff, parents and visitors, who are not vaccinated or whose vaccination status is unknown.
- Consider requiring everyone to wear a mask when indoors.
- Children under 2 years old should **never** wear a mask.
- Masks should not be worn while the person is actively eating or drinking, or when showering, swimming, or sleeping/napping.
- Masks for children 2 years old and over are not recommended when visiting outdoor spaces exclusively used by your program or engaged in an activity where masks cannot be tolerated.

- Masks are required when on public transportation or school buses, except for children under age 2 or people who are medically unable to tolerate them. Many businesses and public buildings also require masks.

Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection

- Shared workstations should be cleaned and disinfected between users.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces regularly between users.
- Remind staff, children and visitors to practice healthy hand hygiene; wash hands often with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.

Screening and Testing

- Continue to conduct health screening for COVID-19 for children, staff and visitors.
- Report positive COVID-19 cases to the Health Department's [Borough Offices](#). They will provide further information.

Communications

- Always inform staff, parents and guardians of any site-specific policies.
- Remind staff, children and visitors to stay home if sick or have recently tested positive for COVID-19, are not fully vaccinated against COVID-19 or were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Remind staff, parents and guardians to inform you if they or their children test positive for COVID-19.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.

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