

# FALL 2021 GUIDANCE FOR DANE COUNTY CHILD CARE PROGRAMS

This document was created in partnership with The UW Pediatric Medical Advisory Group

## Section 1: Strategies to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

Child care has been operating since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and has filled a critical need in our community. Given the nature of child care – close spaces with multiple groups of unvaccinated children congregating – it is important that we remain diligent in implementing strategies that prevent the spread of disease. We know that the most effective way to prevent transmission in our community is to support everyone being vaccinated.

However, given the highly contagious nature of the Delta Variant, and the fact that children under 12 cannot yet be vaccinated, **we strongly recommend universal masking for all teachers, staff, and children over the age of 2 in child care regardless of vaccination status.**

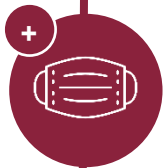
Implementing all prevention strategies listed below provides the best opportunity to offer safe and consistent programming. Based on [CDC guidance](#), the following prevention strategies should be layered to reduce spread. When working together, these strategies have a greater impact than any one strategy on its own.



### TOP PRIORITY: Promoting vaccination

Achieving high levels of COVID-19 vaccination among eligible children, as well as teachers, staff, and household members, is the most critical strategy to help child care safely operate.

People 12 years and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Child cares can promote vaccinations among teachers, staff, and families by providing information about COVID-19 vaccination, encouraging vaccine trust and confidence, and establishing supportive policies (such as paid leave time to get vaccinated or care for kids while families get vaccinated) and practices that make vaccination as easy and convenient as possible.



### TOP PRIORITY: Consistent and correct mask use for all teachers, staff, and children over the age of 2 in child care, regardless of vaccination status

Masks can help to provide protection from COVID-19. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded outdoor settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.

- **Indoors:** Mask use is recommended for all teachers, staff, and children over the age of 2 in child care, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Outdoors:** In general, people do not need to wear masks outdoors. Unvaccinated people should consider wearing a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained, close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.



### Staying home when sick and getting tested

Teachers, staff, and children who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as COVID-19 or the flu, should stay home and get tested. Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keep infections out of schools and prevent spread to others. If a person develops COVID-19 symptoms or is a close contact, they should get tested. More information about community testing sites can be found on our [website](#). DHS also offers a [testing program](#) for child care providers.



### Handwashing and respiratory etiquette

Diligent attention to handwashing is critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19 and other infectious illnesses. Modeling and practicing respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) is another important tool to decrease spread of illnesses including COVID-19. Child care centers should monitor and reinforce those behaviors and provide adequate, easily accessible handwashing supplies.



### Physical distancing and cohorting

Child care programs where not everyone is fully vaccinated should implement physical distancing of 6 feet to the extent possible indoors. Because of the essential service that child care programs provide, child care programs should not exclude children from in-person care to keep a minimum distance requirement. When it is not possible to maintain physical distancing, it is especially important to layer other prevention strategies.

Cohorting means keeping people together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout the entire day. The use of cohorting can limit the spread of COVID-19 between cohorts, but if a child care program is unable to cohort groups, they should not exclude children from attending their care.



### Contact tracing, in combination with isolation and quarantine

Child care programs should continue to collaborate with the local health department to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. Child care centers are required to report positive cases to PHMDC by completing this [survey online](#) or calling 608-266-4821. This includes identifying which children, teachers, and staff with positive COVID-19 test results should isolate and which close contacts should quarantine. Child care programs can refer to our Prepare for When Someone is Sick with COVID-19 [document](#), and should follow our [exclusion chart](#).



### Ventilation

Improving ventilation can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Along with other preventive strategies, including wearing a well-fitting, multi-layered mask, bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside. This can be done by opening multiple doors and windows, using child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows, or making changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems.



### Cleaning and disinfection

In general, cleaning once a day is enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Visit the [CDC's website](#) for more information on proper cleaning and disinfection.



### Screening testing to promptly identify cases, clusters, and outbreaks

CDC recommends offering screening testing depending on community transmission, population, and activity. See the [CDC website](#) for more information.

## Section 2: Frequently Asked Questions

### Is it safe to have visitors?

Child care programs should review their rules for visitors and family engagement activities.

- Child care programs should limit nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations with people who are not fully vaccinated, particularly in areas when there is moderate-to-high COVID-19 community transmission.
- Child care programs should not limit access for DSPs or mothers who are breastfeeding their infants, but can ensure compliance with child care program visitor policies.
- Develop plans for meeting new families that allow family and staff to gather while maintaining prevention strategies.
- Develop plans or procedures for parents and/or guardians to visit their children while maintaining prevention strategies.
- Home-based child care programs with people living in the home who are not fully vaccinated should require mask-wearing for unvaccinated persons and keep as much physical distance as possible.
- Home visitors may consult the Health Resources and Services Administration's [Home Visiting Information During COVID-19](#).

### How should we handle school meals?

- Maximize physical distance as much as possible between people who are not fully vaccinated while eating (especially indoors). When possible, consider using additional spaces for mealtime seating, including eating meals and snacks outdoors or in well-ventilated spaces whenever possible.
- Given very low risk of transmission from food, food packaging, surfaces and shared objects, there is no need to limit food service operations to single use items and packaged meals.
- People should wash hands with soap and water before and after meals.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed and sanitized before and after meals.
- Promote hand washing before, during, and after shifts, before and after eating, after using the toilet, and after handling garbage, dirty dishes, or removing gloves.
- Improve ventilation in food preparation, service, and eating areas.

For more information and additional prevention strategies, please refer to the [CDC's Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#) guide.