



Updated April 4, 2020

Guidance and Recommendation for Child Care Operating in Tarrant County during COVID-19 Response Period

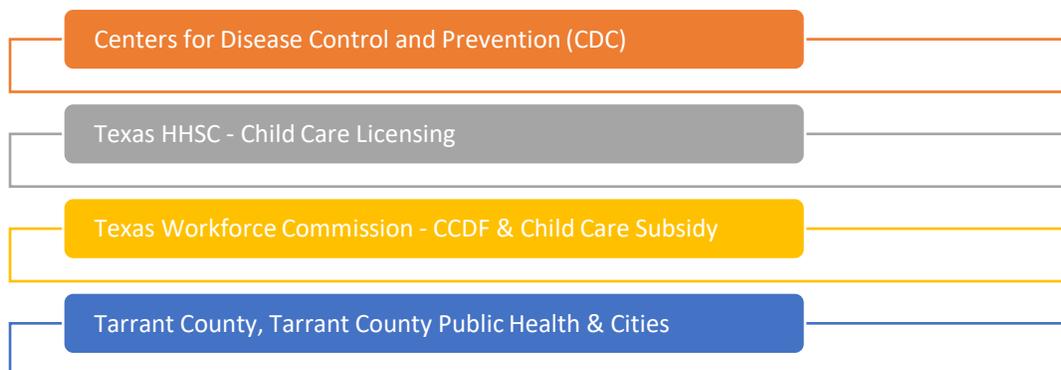
Child care providers are working to provide an essential service during the COVID-19 response period. Tarrant County and the Cities of Arlington and Fort Worth wish to express their appreciation. We also wish to help child care navigate easily through the many changes impacting families as well as impacting your child care facility. This guide is meant to assist child care providers in understanding the guidance and recommendations from different entities – to help you and the children you are for stay safe and healthy during COVID-19 response period.

Many essential workers in Tarrant County who are also parents are trying to find child care options during this period of a mandatory “stay at home” order for non-essential workforce. Child care centers and licensed or registered child care homes are allowed to be open for care for children of essential workers.

Parents may want to keep their children at home, when possible. The use of licensed child care centers and registered homes are an important asset and vital function during our emergency response in Tarrant County. For a child care business or nonprofit, at this time, it is your business decision if you want to be open for service to essential workforce or closed at this time.

What Government Entities are Guiding Child Care?

Child care programs operating in Tarrant County should be following the guidance of the following entities:





CDC:

The [Centers for Disease Control & Prevention \(CDC\)](#) nationally is providing guidance to the federal government and to the states. They are a trusted source of information on health and safety. Specific guidance was issued to child care and schools

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

Supplemental 4/2/2020 English: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

SPANISH: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index-sp.html>

HHSC - CHILD CARE LICENSING:

For licensed and registered facilities operating in Texas, the [Texas HHSC-Child Care Licensing unit](#) continues to be a primary source of regulation and guidance. Licensing regulations have not been waived statewide during this period, but additional guidance has been issued by Child Care Licensing (CCL).

Guidance on March 16: <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2020/03/covid-19-guidance-child-care-providers>

Updated Guidance on March 27: <https://hhs.texas.gov/about-hhs/communications-events/news/2020/03/guidance-letter-daycare-child-care-providers-about-variances>

TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION:

On March 27, [Texas Workforce Commission \(TWC\)](#) issued additional recommendations to Workforce Boards across Texas, including Tarrant Workforce Solutions. On March 30, 2020, the County and City officials are recognizing these TWC recommendations for all licensed and registered child care providers operating in Tarrant County: https://www.twc.texas.gov/files/policy_letters/attachments/07-20-att-1-twc.pdf

LOCAL TARRANT COUNTY, TARRANT COUNTY HEALTH & MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES:

During a period of emergency response, the local authorities such as [Tarrant County, Tarrant County Public Health or municipal authorities](#) (i.e. cities) may also provide requirements or recommendations.

Tarrant County is currently operating under a “stay at home” order through April 30 Please continue to monitor as this deadline could be extended. <http://fortworthtexas.gov/COVID-19/>



For your convenience, we've worked to incorporate these different points of guidance into a single document... to help you providing care to children easy access to recommendations and requirements.

Information below is compiled from ALL VARIOUS AUTHORITIES referenced above and may be updated.

General Guidance

Exclude children, staff, parents and guardians from child care sites if they are showing symptoms affiliated with COVID-19, have been in contact with someone with a confirmed case of COVID-19 in the last 14 days, or are at high risk due to underlying health conditions. Limit outside visitors.

People at Increased Risk for Serious Complications of COVID-19

Persons who are older, pregnant, or who have underlying health conditions, including those with compromised immune systems or respiratory conditions like severe asthma, are at higher risk to develop complications from this virus. These individuals should not provide child care or visit child care facilities.

Health Screening at Entry

Take the temperature and check symptoms for staff, children and any others upon entry each day and ask if medications were used to lower the child's temperature and if there are any household members with COVID-19. Use forehead or disposable thermometers and not oral thermometers.

Social Distancing

Reduce group sizes to no larger than 10 people total, including children and adults (e.g. one adult and nine children, two adults and eight children, etc.). Keep groups together throughout the day and do not combine groups (e.g. at opening and closing). To the degree possible, maintain the same groups from day to day. This will help reduce potential exposures and may prevent an entire program from shutting down if exposure does occur.

To maximize space between people in a group, limit rooms to 10 people total in typical child care facilities or school-age facilities. Large rooms, like gyms, could potentially be divided into two rooms. When dividing a large space, create clear barriers with cones, chairs, tables, etc. to ensure a minimum of 6 feet between the two groups. The groups should remain separate throughout the day.

Incorporate social distancing within groups to the degree possible, aiming for at least three to size feet between children and minimizing the amount of time children are in close contact with each other.

Suggestions include:

- Eliminate large group activities.
- Limit the number of children n each program space
- Increase the distance between children during table work.
- Plan activities that do not require close physical contact between multiple children.
- Limit nonessential visitors and postpone or cancel use of classroom volunteers.



- Do your best to help create distance between infants and toddlers. Do not use cribs or other containing devices and do not overly restrict the movement of infants and toddlers during waking hours.
- At nap time, ensure that children's naptime mats are spaced out as much as possible ideally 6 feet apart.
- Limit item sharing, and if items are shared, remind children to not touch their faces and wash their hands after using these items.
- Limit use of water or sensory tables and wash hands immediately after any use of these tools.
- Minimize time standing in lines for children, such as during bathroom breaks or lunch lines.
- Incorporate additional outside time and open windows frequently.
- Adjust the HVAC system to allow for more fresh air to enter the program space.
- Avoid gathering in larger groups for any reason. Outside time and lunch should be taken with group (no large gathering or combining groups).
- Cancel or postpone special events such as festivals, holidays events and special performances.
- Restrict field trips.
- Restrict trainings, staff meetings and gatherings.

Transportation

- Programs may consider discontinuing transportation during COVID-19 response to reduce close contact as seating on buses may make person-to-person transmission more likely. Contact Child Care Licensing if you need guidance.

Outside Play

- Offer outdoor play in staggered shifts. If multiple groups are outside at the same time, they should have a minimum of six feet of open space between outdoor play areas or visit these areas in shifts so they are not congregating. Always wash hands immediately after outdoor play time.

Meals and Snack Time

- Meals and snacks should be provided in the classroom if possible to avoid congregating in large groups.
- If meals must be provided in a lunch room, please stagger meal times, arrange tables to ensure that there is at least six feet of space between groups in the lunchroom, and clean tables between lunch shifts.
- Eliminate family style meals or have employees (not children) handle utensils and serve food to reduce the spread of germs.

Drop-off and pick-up

- Do not combine groups in the morning or afternoon.
- You may wish to alternative drop off and pick up times for each small group if possible to avoid a large number of people congregating outside the facility to pick up.



- Wash hands or use hand sanitizer before and after signing children in and out each day. Do not share a common pen. Parents should use their own pen if possible. If check-in is electronic, try to provide alcohol wipes and frequently clean the screens or keyboards. Wipe down any swipe cards used.
- Ideally, the same parent or designated person should drop off and pick up the child every day.

Hygiene Practices

- Practice frequent hand washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and require handwashing upon arriving at the center, when entering the classroom, before meals or snacks, after outside time, after going to the bathroom and prior to leaving for home. Help very young children to ensure they are handwashing effectively.
- Adults may use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol, but this substance is very toxic if consumed by children.
- Advise children, families and staff to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs or sneezes with an elbow or a tissue. Throw tissues in the trash and then clean hands with soap and water or hand sanitizer (if soap and water not readily available).
- Keep hand sanitizers safely away from young children to avoid consumption or inappropriate use.
- Adults should use disposable gloves when cleaning, diapering, handling trash, preparing meals, cleaning noses, touching dirty laundry and assisting with toileting. Gloves should be disposed after each activity and each child. Hands should be immediately washed upon removal of gloves.
- Provide adequate supplies with good hygiene, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, and paper towels. If you are having difficulty obtaining these supplies, please contact Child Care Associates at 817.838.0055.
- Clean and disinfect touched surfaces frequently throughout the day.
- Develop a schedule for cleaning and disinfecting. An example can be located on the CDC website.

Clean and Sanitize Toys/Bedding

- Toys and materials that cannot be cleaned and sanitized should not be used.
- Toys that children have placed in their mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion should be set aside until they are cleaned by a person wearing gloves and air-dried.
- Machine washable cloth toys should be used by one individual at a time or should not be used at all. These toys should be laundered before used by another child.
- Do not share toys with other groups of infants or toddlers, unless they are washed and sanitized before being moved from group to the other.



- Set aside toys that need to be cleaned. Place in a dish pan with soapy water or put in a separate container marked for “soiled toys.” Keep dish pan and water out of reach of children to prevent risk of drowning. Washing with soapy water is the ideal method for cleaning. 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 are not considered as a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfecting procedures.
- Keep each child’s bedding separate. Bedding that touches a child’s skin should be cleaned weekly or before use by another child.
- Follow guidelines on disinfecting solutions or CDC guidelines. The CDC recommends 4 teaspoonful of bleach per every 32 ounces of water

Emotional Support

- **Please watch the stress of caregivers, parents and children in this time.** This unprecedented time has added stress to many households and programs may want to increase active supervision by the center leader and create some processes that staff could temporarily “tap out” of classroom duties if needed.
- Child care staff should remember they are mandatory reporters in Texas and follow all guidance on abuse and neglect concerns even during the COVID response period.
- Consider changing up the curriculum to have more emotionally supportive activities or introduce more “quiet areas” with comfort items for children who may benefit from private time.
- The **Help Me Grow North Texas** call center is available for you if you wish to speak to a specialist familiar with young children and families. 844-NTX-KIDS (844-689-5437). Consider calling if you wish to discuss any stress or concerns that you are experiencing, staff members or children in your care. The call line is open M-F 8am – 5pm and messages left will be returned.

Actions to Consider if a Child, Staff or Child’s Household Member Develops COVID-19 or Similar Symptoms:

- Staff or children with fever (100.4 F or higher), cough, or shortness of breath should be excluded entrance from child care facilities and stay away from others. If in the facility, please separate the individual from all other until the ill individual can leave the facility. The ill individual (or if a child, the child’s parent or guardian) should contact their health care provider for immediate



assistance. Children with household member(s) with confirmed COVID-19 should also be excluded from the child care facility.

- If a child or staff member develops symptoms of COVID-19, you should contact the local health jurisdiction to identify the close contacts who may need to quarantine. Members of the infected child's or adult's group may be considered close contacts.
- Facilities experiencing a confirmed case of COVID-19 among their population should consider closing at least temporarily (as advised by local health officials). The duration may be dependent on staffing levels, outbreak levels in the community or severity of illness in infected individual. Symptom-free children and staff should not attend or work at another facility, which could potentially expose others. Facilities should undergo a thorough cleaning and disinfecting and continue to monitor for ill individuals.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- If the infected individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19 spent minimal time (i.e. 10 minutes or less) in close contact with those in the child care facility, the facility may consider closing for 2-5 days to do a thorough cleaning and disinfecting and to continue to monitor for ill individuals. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html>
- For any of these circumstances, the child care program should notify parents of other children at the facility of the situation, describe how the program is responding and continue to communicate updates to families.
- Staff at licensed or registered family child care homes should ensure that anything in the home who is ill should self-isolate. If the individual residing in the family home has a fever, he/she should be symptom-free for at least 72 hours. If in this circumstance, the licensed or registered family child care home may consider closing the facility and should contact Tarrant County Public Health and your Licensing Inspector for additional guidance.

Returning to a child care facility after suspected COVID-19 symptoms

If a staff member or child has symptoms of COVID-19 or is a close contact of someone with COVID-19, they can return to the child care facility if the following conditions are met:

- If individuals have fever, cough or shortness of breath and have not been around anyone who has been diagnosed with COVID-19, they should stay home away from others until 72 hours



after the fever is gone and symptoms get better. IF the person's symptoms worsen, they should contact their healthcare provider to determine if they should be tested for COVID-19.

- If an individual is diagnose with COVID-19, they must remain out of the facility for a minimum of 7 days after the onset of first symptoms. They may return under the following conditions:
 - If you had a fever, 3 days after the fever ends AND you see an improvement in your initial symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of breath);
 - If you do not have a fever, 3 days after you see an improvement in your initial symptoms (e.g. cough, shortness of break);
 - OR
 - 7 days after symptom onset
- If an individual believes they have had close contact to someone with COVID-19 but are not currently sick, they should monitor their health for fever, cough or shortness of breath during the 14 days after the last day there were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. They should not go to work or school, and should avoid public places for 14 days.

Cleaning and Disinfecting Procedures

Increase the frequency with which you clean toys, manipulatives, equipment and surfaces, especially doorknobs, high-tough surfaces, check-in counters and restrooms. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboard and electronics and wash hands after use. Minimize the potential for the spread of germs in the program space by temporarily removing toys that are not easily cleanable (such as stuffed animals and pillows) and rotate the toys that are out at any time so that they can be adequately cleaned and sanitized.

If groups of children are moving from one area to another in shifts, cleaning measures must be completed prior to the new group entering this area.

- Cleaning refers to the removal of dirt and impurities, including germs, from surfaces. Cleaning alone does not kill germs. But by removing the germs, it decreases their number and therefore decrease the risk of spreading infection.
- Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces after an object has been cleaned. Killing germs that remain on surfaces after cleaning further reduces any risk of spreading infection. Attempting to disinfect without first cleaning an object will reduce the disinfectant's effectiveness and potentially leave more germs on the object.

Staff cleaning should follow the disinfectant manufacturer's instructions:

- Use the proper concentration of disinfectant. Proper use of bleach with water and spray bottles may be a reasonable solution if unable to locate your typical disinfecting products.
https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/B/bleach_solution_fact_sheet.pdf
- Follow child care licensing rules for disinfecting.
- Take care to keep cleaning materials away from young children at all time.



- Follow the product’s hazard warnings and instructions for personal protective equipment (PPE) such as gloves, eye protection and adequate ventilation.
- PPE and cleaning supplies may be difficult to come by during this period of COVID-19 response. Please contact Tarrant’s **Early Learning Alliance** at ELA@earlylearningtx.org if you have these needs for supplies for guidance and suggestions.

Playground:

Please follow current child care licensing requirements for cleaning playground spaces.

“Deep” Cleaning:

Extra cleaning may be required if a COVID-19 case has been confirmed in your facility. Please follow the guidance of Tarrant County public health and/or CDC recommendations for deep cleaning.

Carpets:

Disinfecting carpets is not necessary or recommended for respiratory viruses. Viruses do not live long on soft surfaces. Please follow current child care licensing and your facility standards for carpets.

Shared Hands-On Teaching Materials:

These items need to be cleaned at the end of the day. Soap and water is the first step. Some items could then be sanitized. Playdough cannot be cleaned or sanitized, so consider individual containers for each child with names on labels, or discontinue use. Facilities should consider removing water tables, sensory tables, etc. from use for the period of COVID response. Limit shared teaching materials to those that can be easily cleaned and disinfected at the end of the day and more often as needed.

Who to Contact with Questions

HHSC - CHILD CARE LICENSING:

A great source of connection is always your individual child care Licensing Inspector. Most child care programs know their assigned Licensing Inspector and they are working remotely daily. Every child care program was being called by their Inspector or emailed to see if help was needed. There are also Intake lines in Fort Worth (or Dallas). Voice mails may be left and calls are returned M-F between 8am and 5pm. Fort Worth Intake: 817-321-8604

Please contact child care licensing if you have a valid case of COVID-19 for guidance and connecting with Tarrant County Health.

Be aware that all child care licensing regulations are still active during COVID-19 response. If you need need to make a change in your program operations, or to file a variance or waiver on a regulation, you are encouraged to do so. You may go to your online [Child Care Licensing Account](#) or by contacting your licensing inspector. Possible program operations changes could be:



- Adding services like night time care
- Changing your hours or the days you are operating
- Changing the ages served
- Moving to a temporary location

If you don't know who your current licensing inspector is, you can send an email to MSC@hhsc.state.tx.us

CHILD CARE MANAGEMENT SERVICES

We know there are a lot of questions about Child Care Management Services (CCMS) as policies are changing to help ensure response to COVID-19 does not negatively impacts a CCMS child care provider and does not negatively impact families receiving child care subsidy assistance. Additionally, there is NEW funding being made available in Texas to provide CCMS subsidy for COVID-essential personnel. <https://gov.texas.gov/news/post/governor-abbott-announces-new-processes-to-preserve-and-extend-child-care-capacity-for-front-line-workers>

If you are currently a CCMS provider, information will be provided to you with guidance to be able to near-term provide subsidy assistance to essential workers. <https://tarrantcountyccms.org/> or call 817-831-0374.

If you would like to sign up to become a CCMS provider in order to provide child care for essential workers and receive subsidy funding for this care, please proactively contact CCMS to begin an expedited process of signing up. <https://tarrantcountyccms.org/> or call 817-831-0374.

LOCAL TARRANT COUNTY, TARRANT COUNTY HEALTH & MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES:

If you believe you, a staff member, child or family member in contact with the child care program has a positive case of COVID-19, please contact Tarrant County Public Health at 817-248-6299 for additional guidance.