

March 17, 2020

COVID-19: Information and Support for Home-Based Child Care Providers

The Illinois Department of Children & Family Services (IDCFS) knows that many home-based child care providers are wondering what can or should be done to prepare for a possible increase in the number of cases of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Illinois.

The United States (U.S.) Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) provides up-to-date information about prevention, symptoms, testing, and the current situation. Follow CDC recommendations.

At this time, the Governor has not mandated that child care homes licensed by the Department of Children and Family Services (or legally license-exempt homes) close. However, child care homes are allowed to close if they so choose. In making this decision, child care home providers may wish to consider whether they (or anyone in their household) is at elevated risk for the virus, such as individuals who are over age 60 or have an existing health condition, as it is important that these people limit exposure to people outside of their home. Providers may also consider whether they serve families where parents are required to work outside of their homes during this public health emergency.

If you participate in the Child Care Assistance Program and your program does decide to close, please know that the Illinois Department of Human Services is developing a simplified waiver process for the 80% attendance requirement for being paid for all eligible days for each enrolled child. More guidance on that waiver process will be issued soon.

If your child care home stays open:

The health and well-being of children, families, and staff in Illinois is of utmost importance. Illinois is working to slow the spread of the virus causing COVID-19. There are steps home-based child care providers can take to help minimize the COVID-19 spread.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid exposure. Implementing these strategies will help keep you and the families you serve healthy, and can also help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases:

- **Wash hands often** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after you have been in a public place, or after blowing nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- **Ensure that children and families wash their hands immediately** upon arrival, and right before leaving your home for the day. You should wash your hands after each child's arrival and departure, too.
- **Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth** with unwashed hands.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. All hand surfaces should be covered; hands should be rubbed together until they feel dry.
- **Cover mouth and nose** with a tissue when coughing or sneezing or use the inside of the elbow.
- **Increase your normal cleaning and disinfecting routine** for toys, tables, and other things that children frequently touch. Normal household cleaning and disinfecting products are effective.
- **Strictly enforce** policies about excluding children who are ill.
- **Stay at home** as much as possible during the time that schools are closed.
- **Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces daily.** This includes tables, doorknobs, light switches, countertops, handles, desks, phones, keyboards, toilets, faucets, and sinks.

For more information, see [Steps to Prevent Illness](#) or [Handwashing: Clean Hands Save Lives](#) from the CDC.

The CDC also has a guide, [CDC Get Your Home Ready: Checklist for Individuals and Families](#) with more information on how families can create a household plan of action.

Develop an Action Plan

Through collaboration and coordination with local health departments, home-based child care providers can take steps to share information about COVID-19 and its potential spread within their community. IDCFS recommends that you create a plan that outlines, but is not limited to, the following:

Be Proactive

- Develop strategies to reduce the spread of infectious diseases. Effective strategies build on already established infection control policies and practices.
- Determine how this outbreak may impact your ability to provide care to children with special needs, including medical issues.
- Determine a plan for notifying families if you must temporarily discontinue services due to illness or risk of illness.

Avoid Exposure

- Ensure children's daily health checks are completed upon arrival. This may include temperature checks.
Strictly enforce policies about excluding children who are ill.
- Inform children and families, as well as potential visitors that people with symptoms will not be able to enter the home. Be sure to ask visitors upon arrival if they have had potential exposure to COVID-19, recently traveled from an affected geographic area, or who appear to be experiencing fever, cough, or shortness of breath. If they answer yes to any of those questions, do not allow them to enter the home.
- Minimize large group gatherings, like play groups, until further notice.

Sanitize

- Purchase infection control supplies such as hand sanitizer and soap for children, parents and visitors to your facility per **CDC recommendations**.
- Evaluate existing cleaning procedures against the **current CDC cleaning guidance**.

Inform

- If you determine that you need to close your family child care home, please visit [this form](#) to report your closure.

For additional information, see the [CDC Interim Guidance for Administrators of U.S. Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#) for additional recommendations.

For ongoing updates to the situation, visit the following:

[IDPH COVID-19 Website](#)

[CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)