

2020-21 Oakland Early Learning Symposium Series
Navigating the New Now: Early Learning During COVID-19
Part 1: Reopening Child Care Safely
Question and Answers - As of 9/15/20

COVID-19 Cases

- *What if children are asymptomatic? Are they allowed to come to child care?* Unfortunately, there is no way of knowing when a child is asymptomatic, so we are not able to restrict children who are asymptomatic from child care.
- *What about the time lag between sending the child home and verifying a positive test result?* As per the [Alameda County Public Health \(ACPHD\) Process for Confirmed COVID-19 Cases for Schools, Child Care and Extracurricular Programs](#), children with suspected COVID-19 cases should [isolate at home](#) until test results are available. In this situation, a cohort should only be closed if there is strong clinical suspicion that the person undergoing testing has COVID-19. For example, if the person is symptomatic following exposure to a confirmed case, or if the symptoms are highly specific for COVID-19 (e.g., loss of taste and smell), the cohort should be closed while awaiting test results. This decision should be made in consultation with ACPHD. Members of the cohort should be told to self-quarantine until test results are available.
- *How does a center or child care provider deal with very serious cases of COVID-19?* If you are made aware of a confirmed COVID-19 case among your staff or students, contact the ACPHD COVID Workplace Team at covidworkplace@acgov.org or call (510) 268-2101. ACPHD will work with the childcare program to determine the next steps. There are also [resources available](#) to support staff and children's social emotional health during this difficult time.

Masks and Preventive Measures

- *Should children with asthma wear a mask?* There is guidance on masks and people with asthma [here](#).
- *How mandatory is it for 2 year olds and up to wear masks?* As per the [State of California's guidance](#), children aged 2 years and older should wear face coverings, especially when indoors or when a six-foot physical distance from others cannot be maintained.
- *Should children be wearing masks inside the center at all times?* As per [Alameda County Public Health Departments Frequently Asked Questions for Child Care Programs](#), staff are required to wear face coverings, and children in child care are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings unless they cannot tolerate wearing one. The use of face coverings in children under the age of 12 must be subject to adult supervision. Never place face coverings on babies or children under two because of the danger of suffocation.
- *How should child care providers be utilizing gloves?* As per the [State of California's guidance](#), child care providers should wear gloves for tasks such as serving food, handling trash, or using cleaning and disinfectant products.
- *What is the required number of adults for the group/cohort size of 14 children? Is there a different requirement, per age group (e.g. 0-2; 3-5; 6-8)?* You must maintain your ratios as mandated by California Community Care Licensing (CCL). Please reference [PIN 20-06-CCP](#) from the State of California on current staff:child ratios.
- *We need guidance as to how often children wash hands? Does that mean between each activity? How often?* The [Center for Disease Control](#) recommends the following: "All children, staff, and volunteers should engage in hand hygiene at the following times: arrival to the facility and after breaks; before and after preparing food or drinks;

before and after eating or handling food, or feeding children; before and after administering medication or medical ointment; before and after diapering; after using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom; after coming in contact with bodily fluid; after handling animals or cleaning up animal waste; after playing outdoors or in sand and after handling garbage. Wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If hands are not visibly dirty, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used if soap and water are not readily available. Supervise children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent ingestion. Assist children with handwashing, including infants who cannot wash hands alone. After assisting children with handwashing, staff should also wash their hands. Place posters describing handwashing steps near sinks. Developmentally appropriate posters in multiple languages are available from CDC.”

- For more information on cleaning and sanitizing in ECE, check out the [EPA’s website](#).

Air Quality

- *How do we handle bad air quality and spending time indoor vs outdoor?* From Kate Shaheed at St. Vincent’s Day Home: “We stay inside if it gets to 100 on the AQI and plan “rainy day” curriculum – movement games, art projects, cardboard building projects, etc. “
- *Do HEPA air filters help, if you can't get fresh air because of the fires?* Portable HEPA air cleaners are filtration devices that may help to remove aerosols containing SARS-CoV-2 virus particles. However, to our knowledge no direct studies have been published about this. The [CDC has suggested](#) that, in efforts to improve indoor air quality during the pandemic, portable HEPA filtration units may be used when permanent air-handling systems are not feasible. These portable HEPA filtration units should be considered a supplemental or precautionary measure to reduce the presence of aerosols in a room with limited ventilation. In general, however, in order to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission, it is MORE important to improve the quality of ventilation and frequency of air exchanges in classrooms and childcare centers, in addition to following all of the other necessary control measures (universal face coverings, frequent hand washing, disinfection of high-touch surfaces, physical distancing, etc.).

When outdoor air quality is unacceptable, due to such factors as wildfire smoke, it may be necessary to close the doors and windows of a classroom or child care center to protect those who are especially sensitive, such as those with asthma or other respiratory diseases. Use of portable HEPA filtration units in this situation is advisable, in order to remove particulates from the smoke and potentially to reduce the concentration of indoor aerosols that may contain SARS-CoV-2. Ideally, the chosen portable HEPA filtration unit should have a Clean Air Delivery Rate (CADR) sufficient to achieve at least 5-6 air changes per hour. Direct the airflow of the HEPA air cleaner so it does not blow directly from one person to another, and otherwise follow the manufacturer’s guidelines for placement in the room and replacement of the filters.

If exhaust fans are used, they should be positioned to remove air from inside the room and release potentially contaminated air directly outdoors. Ideally place exhaust fans at ceiling height to move air up and out. Ensure fans are not blowing out of windows directly into walking paths or areas where individuals may congregate. Ceiling fans should be adjusted so that fins are rotating in a direction that draws air up toward the ceiling rather than down onto occupants.

Social Distancing

- *Can we allow children playing together in the classroom or should they be playing separately, no building together, role-playing, etc?* Children should be grouped in cohorts/bubbles/groups as [per state guidance](#). As far as playing together in those cohorts, this [excerpt from state guidance](#) on group cohorts states: “Physical distancing between young children in the same cohort should be balanced with developmental and socio-emotional needs of this age group. Supervised care settings should follow applicable industry guidance on appropriate use of face coverings by children and youth.”

- *Do children need to be 6 feet away from others all the time, even when they have a mask on?* No, see link and language from state above. And our local [ACPHD FAQ](#): Do children have to stay 6 feet away from others when they are in their bubble/group? No, they do not have to stay six feet apart from the other children in their stable group/bubble. The stable group helps children and staff stay safe since they are not always able to physically distance from one another. When children remain in a stable group, it prevents the co-mingling of too many people and helps decrease the possibility of the virus spreading.
- *How should circle time look?* From Kate Shaheed at St. Vincent’s Day Home: “We put markers on the rug and encourage distancing.”
- *Should we use nursing students in the “bubble”?* *Are we recommending they come in centers?* It is your choice whether to invite the SMU nursing students into your program. The nursing students are well-trained and versed on safety and risk mitigation against COVID. Many programs have found the nurses to be a great resource for their programs. The nursing students have been utilized in a number of ways: assistance with health check-ins and assessments; creating fun and age appropriate health education for the children; providing guidance on maintaining a safe and healthy setting.
- *What does social distancing look like? Can you please share some pictures of social distancing?* From Kate Shaheed at St. Vincent’s Day Home: “Children have their own dishpan of materials and an assigned spot at the table. We set them up for individual play at a distance. When they are playing in the classroom – blocks, dramatic play, etc. – they play with each other much like before but we allow fewer children in each play area at one time. When they are outdoors, they are also playing closely together. Teachers sanitize materials after use. Here is a tip from Blue Skies for Children that we are going to “steal” – keep a bottle of sanitizer in their apron and immediately wipe with towels and then get them right back into circulation.” And check out this St. Vincent’s Day Home [video of their facility on Facebook](#)! And here are photos from Charlotte Guinn’s family child care, promoting social distancing outside by creating art:



Distance Learning

- *How does OUSD PreK online learning work? Hours, types of learning?* All students receive 80 minutes of daily live instruction 4 days a week and 60 minutes of live instruction on Wednesdays.
- *When can the OUSD Pre-K families anticipate receiving Chromebooks?* Tablets have been ordered for all families who said they needed TECH and should be arriving in the next 2 weeks.

- *How can child care providers better support school aged children in their care with their school schedules, zoom, homework and stress?* While there are not many resources available for child care providers assisting older children with distance learning, many of the same principles for parents can apply. These include setting a schedule for finishing school work after zoom calls are over, ensuring children are getting time off of screens to be active outside (when possible), and communicating with parents about school work.
- For more information about distance learning in ECE, checkout this [free video from Teachstone](#).

Miscellaneous

- *Is there additional insurance for our centers needed during this time?* No, you do not need additional insurance during COVID-19. The Child Care Law Center has additional information about liability [here](#).
- *Are the grab and go meals at OUSD sites accessible to non OUSD children?* Yes [click link here](#)
- *Is there funding available for child cares centers that need to redesign?* LIIF is managing emergency grant requests through a targeted regional effort, the COVID-19 Child Care Project. Eligible providers will receive emergency funding to cover staff salaries, rent and other operating expenses that are usually covered by tuition, [contact them](#) about eligibility and availability of funds.
- *How do we deal with other sickness like colds and flus during COVID- 19?* Please follow our isolation instructions included in [scenario one of this document](#) (page 5). Children should be excluded from care when they have symptoms. Also, [see ACPHD Health Screening Guidance](#).
- *How can centers open if they serve both children and adults?* All child care sites should have [COVID-19 Site Specific Protection Plan](#), which includes safety measures for employees.
- *How to integrate new families into child care? What things should be taken into consideration for new families?* From Kate Shaheed at St. Vincent’s Day Home: “We did a Zoom orientation that was very well attended and helpful. We encourage emails between teachers and parents. We will be doing family-teacher conferences via Zoom as well. I think that encouraging any form of communication is great. Parents love texts with pictures and it is an easy way to build the relationship.”

Additional Resources

- Alameda County Emergency Child Care Response Team’s [Growing Back Stronger website](#) for child care providers looking to stay open or reopen during COVID-19.
- The Alameda County Emergency Child Care Response team has hosted several webinars and posted multiple Question and Answer documents which provide additional information and details [here](#).
- First 5 Alameda County’s COVID-19 Child Care Resources [webpage](#).