

# Interim Guidance for Child Care Facilities Licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

March 19, 2020

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the spread and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The purpose of the guidance is to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among child care facilities, families, and communities. KDHE will provide updated guidance as necessary based on the changing situation. Please check the [CDC website](#) and the [KDHE website](#) (COVID-19 Resource Center) periodically for updated information and guidance for a variety of settings as well as public health and health care professionals.

## KDHE'S POSITION ON CONTINUING OPERATIONS FOR CHILD CARE

KDHE is recommending continuity of operations for child care at this time. However, local public health officers may implement more restrictive guidance and provisions for child care facilities, up to and including closure, within their jurisdiction. KDHE encourages providers to be in close communication with their local public health department as situations regarding COVID-19 are changing frequently. KDHE will communicate updates should our recommendations change. In the absence of a recommendation from state or county public health officers, child care licensees may independently decide to temporarily close based on their own unique situation.

## Important Things to Keep in Mind

- KDHE Child Care Licensing will not issue blanket exceptions to increase capacity or eliminate other health and safety requirements as part of the COVID-19 response. This includes issuing temporary licenses for an existing facility to operate in an alternate location. We await federal guidance on any waivers for requirements related to background checks and initial health and safety training.
- Existing child care facilities are required to continue to operate within the terms of their licenses and to comply with requirements.
- If a facility's license is issued for a location that is closed (e.g. school, church, community center), the licensee cannot legally operate at an alternate location because the authorization to care for children only applies to location/address printed on the license.
- There are no restrictions on enrolling new children as long as the capacity is not exceeded, and the program continues to operate in accordance with the terms of the license in effect. **NOTE:** It is critical that health screening happens prior to entry and on an ongoing for all children and staff. Strong exclusion policies and increased sanitation is essential. These provisions are in place in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Facilities closing temporarily must submit a timely renewal application to ensure there is no gap in licensure and that the license remains in effect and valid.
- Specific licensing questions should be referred to your local licensing surveyor. For more information about local licensing contacts, visit our website at

<http://www.kdheks.gov/kidsnet> and click on *Local County Contacts* ([http://www.kdheks.gov/bcclr/download/county\\_contacts.pdf](http://www.kdheks.gov/bcclr/download/county_contacts.pdf)).

## **Planning and Preparedness Recommendations for Licensed Child Care Facilities**

The most important thing that child care facilities can do now is to prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks. Licensees should take the following steps to help stop or slow the spread of respiratory diseases, including COVID-19:

- Stay informed and know where to go for the most current information. Sources of accurate information include the CDC, KDHE, and your local county health department.
- Develop or update emergency preparedness plans to address possible disruptions in learning and program operations. Your local licensing surveyor is available to provide technical assistance.
  - Determine how to deal with high absentee rates among children and staff.
  - Identify critical functions and positions and plan for alternative coverage in the event of staff absences or closure.
  - Identify methods to communicate with staff and parents in the event of closure.
- Review your policies for the exclusion of sick children and staff.
  - Make sure that parents of children in care and staff are aware and follow the policies.
  - Encourage parents to plan now in the event their child becomes sick. Sick children should not be taken to another child care program or other group setting, even temporarily.
  - Develop flexible sick leave policies that encourage staff to stay home when sick or when caring for sick family members.
- Review children's files and update health assessments and contact information.
- Make plans for the isolation and supervision of sick children until their parents can pick them up.
- Implement monitoring systems to track children and staff absences.
  - Understand the usual absenteeism patterns for your facility.
  - Alert your local health department about large increases in absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses.
- When enrolling new children and hiring new staff, screen by asking appropriate questions. **NOTE:** Be sure to remain current on the KDHE recommendations for screening as well as quarantine and isolation of travelers, continuously updated on the COVID-19 Resource Center <http://www.kdheks.gov/coronavirus/index.htm>.
  - Has there been travel within the last 14 days in a state or country identified as a hot spot for COVID-19 (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>)?
  - Has there been any exposure to an individual diagnosed with COVID-19?
  - Is anyone in the facility showing signs of illness and symptoms?

- a fever greater than 100.4 degrees (F)
  - cough
  - shortness of breath
- Screen children and staff for signs and symptoms of illness (see above).
- Ensure frequent handwashing (<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/index.html>) and cough etiquette (coughing and sneezing into elbow).
- Avoid over-crowded conditions. Encourage children to spread out during story and circle times.
- Allow more than the two-foot minimum required by child care regulations between cribs, cots, and sleep mats. Place cribs, cots, and sleep mats so that children rest “head to toe” rather than “face to face”.
- Get plenty of fresh air. Children of all ages should have an opportunity for daily outdoor play, weather permitting. Indoor rooms should be well ventilated. To promote air circulation, open windows whenever weather permits or when children are out of the area.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning.
  - Clean toys, commonly shared items, and touched surfaces like handrails and doorknobs at least daily and when visibly soiled.
  - Set aside toys children have placed in their mouths or otherwise contaminated with bodily fluids until they have been cleaned and sanitized.
- Stock sinks and restrooms with soap and paper towels.
- Place boxes of facial tissues and waste containers for used tissues throughout the child care area and in places readily accessible to children and staff.

## Recommendations for Child Care Facilities in Communities with Laboratory-Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 Infection

The guidance provided in this section is based on current knowledge of COVID-19. This guidance may be updated as additional information becomes available about the virus, how it spreads, and how severe it is.

If public health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, child care facilities may need to take additional steps in **response** to prevent the spread in the facility. The first step is to talk to local public health officials.

### **Determine if, when, and for how long child care facilities may need to be closed.**

- Licensees should work in close collaboration and coordination with local public health officials and the local licensing surveyor to make closure decisions. Facility closures may be recommended for 14 days or longer. The nature of these actions (geographic scope, facility type, and duration) may change as a local outbreak situation evolves.
  - Local public health officials may recommend temporary closure if a child in care or staff member were present in the facility prior to being confirmed

as a COVID-19 case. The recommendations for the duration of a facility closure will be made case-by-case, based on the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the impacted community.

- Facilities located in a residence should temporarily close if the licensee or someone else living in the residence becomes ill or meets the guidelines for required quarantine available on the COVID-19 Resource Center (<https://govstatus.egov.com/coronavirus>).
- Licensees should work with local public health officials to communicate about a possible COVID-19 exposure. Communication to parents of children in care and to staff members should align with the facility's emergency preparedness plan. When communicating information, it is critical to maintain the confidentiality of any ill child or staff member.
- If a child in care or staff member has been confirmed as a COVID-19 case, the licensee should seek guidance from local public health officials to determine when the child or staff member may return to the facility and what additional steps may be needed. Follow the instructions of local public health officials to determine when children and staff who are well but are sharing a home with someone with a case of COVID-19, should return to the facility.
- When child care facilities are temporarily closed, children and staff should stay home—away from gatherings, crowds, and other social settings.
- Identify strategies to support families in continuing their child's learning in the event of facility closure.
- Understand that the length (duration), criteria, and public health objective of child care facility closures may be re-assessed and changed as a local outbreak situation evolves. Licensees should follow the advice of KDHE and local public health officials.

## More Information

### KDHE Resources

- [COVID-19 Resource Center](#)
- Information Line 1-866-534-3463 (1-866-KDHEINF) Monday – Friday 8 am to 5 pm

### CDC Resources

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 website](#)
- [Health Alert Network: Update and Interim Guidance on Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)
- [About Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick with COVID-19](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Persons Who May Have Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) to Prevent Spread in Homes and Residential Communities](#)

- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travelers](#)
- [Do Your Part. Slow the Spread of Germs](#)
- [Don't Spread Germs at Work](#)
- [Stay Home if You're Sick](#)
- [Information on COVID-19: Pregnant Women and Children](#)
- [Guidance for People at Higher Risk for COVID-19](#)
- [Reducing Stigma and Promoting Resilience](#)

### **Other Federal Agency and Partner Resources**

American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)

- [Hand Washing: A Powerful Antidote to Illness](#)
- [Reducing the Spread of Illness in Child Care](#)
- [Germ Prevention Strategies](#)
- [When to Keep Your Child Home from Child Care](#)

National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education

- [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards for Early Care and Education Programs](#)

Child Care Aware of America

- [Coronavirus: How Does It Impact Child Care Providers and CCR&R's?](#)



# Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) for Child Care Facilities Licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE)

March 19, 2020

This frequently asked questions document is based on what is currently known about the spread and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Please check the [KDHE website](#) periodically for updated information and guidance.

This document is intended for licensed child care facilities licensed by KDHE (day care homes, group day care homes, child care centers, preschools, school age programs, and drop in programs for school age children and youth).

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Q. Why are some facilities closed and others open?

A. KDHE is recommending child care facilities remain open at this time. However, depending on the unique and changing situations of each community, local public health officers may implement more restrictive guidance and provisions for child care facilities, up to and including closure within their jurisdiction. Child care licensees may independently decide to temporarily close based on their own unique situation.

Q. Am I required to close my facility?

A. No. In the absence of a recommendation from the state or county public health officer, you are not required to close. However, you may choose to close based on your specific situation. You are encouraged to be in close communication with your local public health department as situations regarding COVID-19 are changing frequently.

Q. When might I need to close?

A. Public health officials may direct you to close in response to an increase in the spread of COVID-19. For additional information, refer to the [Interim Guidance for Child Care Facilities Licensed by the Kansas Department of Health and Environment](#) on the KDHE [COVID-19 Resource Center](#).

Q. May I continue to enroll new children as long as I don't exceed my license capacity?

A. New enrollment is permitted. However, it is critical that health screening happens prior to entry and ongoing for all new and existing children. See more information about risk and recommendations for quarantine and isolation on the KDHE [COVID-19 Resource Center](#).

- Q. Our facility is located in a school that is closed. Can we continue to operate?
- A. If a facility is located in a school building that is currently closed, you will need approval from the school district and the local public health officer in order to continue operating at that location. Programs are only authorized to operate at the location printed on the license.
- Q. Can a facility licensed to operate in a school building be granted an exception to operate in a new, temporary location?
- A. There are no waivers or exceptions to processes or regulations in place related to COVID-19 response. This includes issuing temporary licenses for an existing facility to operate in an alternate location.
- Q. Can I get an exception to exceed my license capacity?
- A. KDHE will not be granting exceptions to exceed license capacity or eliminate other health and safety requirements related to COVID-19 response.
- Q. Can the two school age children currently enrolled in my home-based child care facility attending before and after school and on breaks stay in care for full days until the crisis has ended?
- A. Yes. K.A.R. 28-4-114(j)(2)(A) allows two additional children 5 to 11 years of age to be present during emergency school closures.
- Q. If I am temporarily closing my licensed facility, do I need to notify anyone?
- A. Yes, please provide this update to your local licensing surveyor. Be sure to notify your local licensing surveyor when you reopen.
- Q. How do I contact my local child care licensing surveyor?
- A. For more information about local licensing contacts, visit the [KDHE Child Care Licensing](#) website and click on *Local County Contacts*.
- Q. If I am temporarily closing and my license is expiring, do I need to submit my renewal application?
- A. Yes. A renewal application is still required to be submitted on time. Facilities closing temporarily must submit a timely renewal application to ensure that the license remains in effect and valid. KDHE will continue to process renewal applications and mail licenses.
- Q. Do I need to have new employees complete the fingerprint background checks before coming to work? What if there is not a location to get the fingerprinting completed?
- A. At this time there is no exception to the background requirements. We await guidance from Federal partners. It is important that you watch for additional

guidance pertaining to background checks on the KDHE child care licensing website.

Q. Can I get an emergency or temporary license?

A. There are no waivers or exceptions to processes or regulations in place related to COVID-19 response. This includes issuing a temporary license.

Q. What can I use for cleaning and disinfecting?

A. Information about cleaning procedures and products is available on the KDHE COVID-19 Resource Center.