



# Arkansas Department of Health

## Arkansas Department of Human Services



To: Child Care Facilities

From: Dr. José Romero, Secretary of Health  
Cindy Gillespie, Secretary of Human Services

Date: August 4, 2021

Subject: COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Facilities

Early childhood education programs are an important part of the infrastructure of communities. They provide safe and supportive care environments for children that support social and emotional development, provide access to critical services, and enable parents, guardians, and caregivers to work. According to the CDC, while fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the SARS-CoV-2 Virus that causes COVID-19, can get sick with COVID-19, and can spread the virus to others. Most early childhood education programs serve children under 12 years of age who are not eligible for vaccination at this time.

The Arkansas Department of Health (ADH) and the Arkansas Department of Human Services (DHS) is providing guidance to the regulated childcare facilities throughout the state on implementing layered COVID-19 prevention strategies to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including infants and children, staff, and other members of their households.

- It is recommended facilities should prohibit persons from the facility with the exception of:
  - Facility staff;
  - Persons with a legal authority to enter, including law enforcement officers, childcare licensing staff, and DHS Child Protective Service's staff;
  - Professionals providing services to children;
  - Children enrolled at the facility;
  - and parents or legal guardians who have children enrolled and present at the facility.
- Before allowing entry into the facility, screen all individuals, including taking the temperature of each person upon arrival at the facility each day. For employees, screening should be done prior to every shift. Deny entry to any person who meets any of the following criteria:
  - Temperature of 100.4°F or above;
  - Signs or symptoms of a respiratory infection, such as but not limited to cough, shortness of breath, sore throat, low-grade fever, or new loss of taste and smell;
  - In the previous 10 days has tested positive for COVID-19;
  - In the previous 14 days has had contact with someone with a confirmed diagnosis of COVID-19, unless fully vaccinated and showing no signs or symptoms.

- Do not allow sick people in the facility. Children and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness should stay home and be referred to their health care provider for testing and care. If a child or staff person becomes sick while at the facility, separate them from other children and staff at the facility. For children, immediately contact the parent or legal guardian.
- All efforts should be made to limit the number of children in each group/class to the extent possible and keeping children in the same assigned group/class each day.
- Maximize physical distance as much as possible when eating.
- Reinforce handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds and covering coughs and sneezes to keep from getting and spreading infectious illness including COVID-19.
- Universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors, regardless of vaccination status. For safety reasons, under **no** circumstances should a mask be placed on a child under the age of 2.
- Encourage staff and family members that have frequent contact with children in the early childhood education setting to get vaccinated.

At this time, fully vaccinated individuals (2 weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as Johnson & Johnson's Janssen vaccine, or 2 weeks after the second dose in a 2-dose series, such as Pfizer or Moderna vaccines) do not have to quarantine if exposed to a positive case provided that the exposed individual does not develop any signs or symptoms. Individuals who are fully vaccinated but have been exposed to a positive case are encouraged to be tested 3-5 days after last exposure to the positive case.

ADH and DHS will continue to closely monitor the evolving COVID-19 outbreak. As the situation is rapidly changing, childcare providers are encouraged to call the ADH COVID-19 School and Child Care Hotline at 833-504-0155 for questions or additional guidance. Please contact the Department of Human Services Division of Child Care & Early Childhood Education, Child Care Licensing at 501-682-8590 for licensing or regulatory questions.

COVID-19 Information:

<https://www.healthy.arkansas.gov/programs-services/topics/novel-coronavirus>

General Protection Guidelines:

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

Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/disinfecting-building-facility.html>

Arkansas Department of Human Services Childcare Pandemic Guidelines:

<https://humanservices.arkansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/Child-Care-Pandemic-Requirements-06.23.2021.pdf>