



IMPORTANT UPDATES AND ACTION NEEDED FOR CHILD CARE FACILITIES
COVID-19 RESPONSE
March 23, 2020

Please read this communication thoroughly. It provides important updates and actions we are asking you to take related to three areas:

1. Updated health guidance
2. Vacancy and closure reporting
3. Ensuring critical workers have access to child care

These updates and actions are intended to help you minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 to both your staff and the children in your care while ensuring that child care remains available to critical workers who are on the front lines of the fight against COVID-19.

1. UPDATED HEALTH GUIDANCE

On March 16, NCDHHS issued guidance that provides child care facilities with steps to take to minimize the risk of exposure to both the staff and the children in their care and reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission in our community.

As the COVID-19 situation continues to develop, NCDHHS is releasing updated Interim Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Health Guidance for Child Care Settings, which can be found at this [link](#).

The updated guidance includes the following additional steps:

- Facilities should encourage parents and caregivers to keep children at home with them if they are able. This will reduce the chance of spread.
- Signs with screening criteria should be posted at the entrance to facility – we have developed a sign for you to use ([link here](#)).
- Only staff needed to maintain ratio compliance should be inside classrooms. Facilities should restrict teachers to one classroom with one group of children and should not use “floater” teachers. This is in order to reduce the number of people coming in and out of classrooms.



- Updated recommendations for exclusion of children and staff who are considered high-risk.

▶▶ **WE NEED YOU TO TAKE THESE ACTIONS:**

1. **Post the sign with screening criteria at the entrance of your facility starting tomorrow, Tuesday, March 24.**
2. **NC DHHS will be releasing an application form on Wednesday, March 25th that should be completed by any facilities that wish to remain open during the health emergency. This form can be completed by both facilities that are currently open as well as those that wish to reopen. All facilities that remain open will need to explicitly agree to follow the [Updated Interim COVID-19 Health Guidance](#) and additional operational expectations. This form should be completed by March 31st, in order for facilities to remain open and provide child care.**

2. VACANCY AND CLOSURE REPORTING

We appreciate your cooperation reporting your service status, capacity, and vacancy information to DCDEE over the phone over the past week.

- **We are going to streamline the collection of this information by shifting reporting to an easy-to-use online form.**
- To support us in matching families in need with available care options and provide data to help make decisions about financial policies to support programs, we are asking that child care providers visit the [form](#) to provide DHHS with the most up-to-date information about your current service status, attendance, available slots, and staffing resources.
- The easy-to-use form consists of a short list of questions and should take you less than ten minutes to complete.
- After your initial entry, your information will be saved, and you will only need to update information that has changed since the previous day. Please visit this [form](#) daily to review your information and make any updates by close of business each day, starting Tuesday, March 24th.

▶▶ **WE NEED YOU TO TAKE THIS ACTION:**

Please visit this [form](#) daily to report your current service status, attendance, available slots, and staffing resources.



3. ENSURING CRITICAL WORKERS HAVE ACCESS TO CHILD CARE

Through a new toll-free number, **1-888-600-1685**, the **Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) Network** will connect families to available care options based on the daily vacancy reporting that you provide.

- We will begin pushing that toll-free line out to the media, employers and the public beginning March 24. We have already begun sharing the toll-free line with health care associations, hospitals and others.
- The toll-free line will indicate that we are prioritizing referrals for critical workers and priority groups, which includes emergency and first responders, hospital staff, front-line healthcare providers, nursing and adult group home staff, child care program staff, food service staff and others working to keep our communities safe and healthy as we respond to COVID-19. Care for children who are receiving child welfare services, homeless, or in unstable or unsafe living arrangements should also be a priority.

While we are encouraging parents and caregivers to keep children at home with them if they are able, we know those families will want to return to your child care facility.

We know that the child care industry, like many others, is struggling financially. We are actively pursuing options to provide financial support to child care programs that remain open to serve the children of critical workers during this challenging time. We will be sending you additional information about financial help in the coming days.

▶▶ **WE NEED YOU TO TAKE THIS ACTION:**

We recommend that you do not bill families for the months where care was not provided, and give those families priority to return to your child care center.