



## Office of Children and Family Services

KATHY HOCHUL  
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE  
Commissioner

### **PLEASE READ: This Letter Contains New COVID-19 Protocols and New Information Regarding School Age Children**

February 4, 2022

Dear Licensed, Registered or Legally-Exempt Group Provider:

This letter contains the most recent requirements for what to do when someone in your child care program is exposed to COVID-19 through a close contact or tests positive for the virus. This includes you, your staff, volunteers, service providers, household members in home-based programs, and any other person who has contact with children in your care. Remember that vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination among all eligible individuals can help child care programs protect staff and children in their care, as well as their families.

**This letter replaces our most recent COVID-19 guidance, sent to you on January 17, 2022.** It is issued in consideration of the most recent guidance issued by the New York State Department of Health and by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) related to child care. Providers are encouraged to read the CDC Guidance, as it contains a lot of information on COVID-19 prevention strategies specific to child care settings and young children. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/child-care-guidance.html>. A lot of information about how to isolate or quarantine, as well as what to look out for, is also available on the Department of Health's website: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-contact-tracing>.

**Please note that the Department of Health has recently issued guidance for K-12 schools. That guidance does not generally apply to child care programs except that children and staff participating in test-to-stay programs in their school district, in order to participate in school, are allowed to continue to ride the school bus and may attend a program licensed or registered to provide child care to school age children (whether on-site at the school or off-site at a different location and whether they include students from a single or multiple schools) in which all appropriate mitigation strategies are followed (e.g. masking, hand hygiene, etc).** It is important that all mitigation strategies are followed closely, including a well-fitting mask, frequent hand hygiene, and other recommended practices.

## A. Isolation

Isolation is for individuals who have been infected with COVID-19, even if they don't have symptoms. Isolation is also for people who are suspected of having COVID-19 because of the symptoms they exhibit. You isolate in order to prevent spreading the virus to others. Below answers how long to isolate depending on your circumstances:

<p><u>If the person is:</u> A child of any age or adult who has <b>symptoms of COVID-19 and is waiting for a test</b>, regardless of vaccination status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anyone with <b>symptoms</b> of COVID-19 must stay out of the child care program for 5 days OR until they receive a negative COVID-19 test (whichever is first).</li><li>• If test is negative and symptoms are improving they can come back to the child care program.</li><li>• If test is positive, follow isolation rules for a COVID positive (next section).</li></ul>
<p><u>If the person is:</u> A child of any age or adult who <b>tests positive</b> for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anyone with a positive COVID test must stay out of the child care program for at least 5 days.</li><li>• Anyone who has <b>tested positive</b> for COVID-19, and who <b>is not experiencing symptoms</b> must isolate for 5 days. After 5 days, they may return to program if they are age 2 or older and can consistently wear a well-fitting mask at program. Day 1 of isolation for someone not experiencing symptoms is the first full day following a positive test. Day zero, is the day you test positive.</li><li>• Anyone who has <b>tested positive</b> for COVID-19 and <b>who is experiencing symptoms</b> must isolate for <i>at least</i> 5 days. Day 1 of isolation for someone who is experiencing symptoms is the first full day following the day symptoms first began and day zero is the first day symptoms began. They may return to the child program after 5 full days AND must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication AND must have improving symptoms before returning to program.</li><li>• Anyone under age 2 or anyone over age 2 but who cannot reliably wear a well-fitted mask for any reason, who has tested positive for COVID-19, must stay out of program for a full 10 days.</li><li>• Anyone hospitalized with COVID-19 or immunocompromised must isolate for at least 10 days and consult a doctor before returning to the child care program.</li></ul>

**For home-based programs**, if any person (provider, staff, household member) is isolating in the home, they must be completely separated from the child care program while it is operating. If complete separation is not possible, the program may not have any unrelated children in care.

**B. QUARANTINE**

Quarantine is for someone who has had **close contact** with someone who tested positive for COVID-19 but **who does not have any symptoms** of COVID-19 and has not tested positive COVID-19. A close contact is someone who was less than 6 feet away from an infected person for 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. Below answers who has to quarantine following close contact with COVID-19 and for how long:

<p><u>If the person:</u> Has received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters (if eligible) <b>OR</b> Had confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days (tested positive using a viral test) <b>OR</b> A staff member or school aged child who has been approved to attend school under a test-to-stay protocol in their school district (regardless of vaccination status)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No quarantine is required before they may return to program.</li> <li>• They do not need to stay out of the program unless they develop symptoms.</li> <li>• <i>If a person under quarantine develops symptoms, they must follow the isolation guidance that starts on page 1 before returning to program.</i></li> <li>• They should wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days.</li> <li>• If they haven't had confirmed COVID-19 in the last 90 days, testing is encouraged on day 5 when possible.</li> </ul>
<p>If the person: Has <b>not</b> received all recommended doses of the vaccine, including boosters (if eligible) <b>OR</b> is unvaccinated</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adults and children over the age of 2 years may return to the child care program after <u>5 days</u> if they are able to wear a well-fitting face mask <b>AND</b> if they are not experiencing symptoms</li> <li>• Children under the age of 2 years, as well as any child who cannot reliably wear a well-fitting mask for any reason, must remain out of the child care program for <u>a full 10 days</u>. They may return to program after 10 days provided they are not experiencing symptoms.</li> <li>• <i>If a person under quarantine develops symptoms, they must follow the isolation guidance that starts on page 1 before returning to program.</i></li> <li>• If a person under quarantine has not had confirmed COVID-19 in the last 90 days, testing is encouraged on day 5 when possible.</li> </ul>

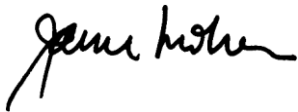
**For home-based programs**, if any person (provider, staff, household member) is quarantining in the home, they must be completely separated from the child care program while it is operating. If complete separation is not possible, the program must temporarily close.

## **Other Information**

For all other COVID precautions, please review the recommendations in the CDC's COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/child-care-guidance.html>). The CDC regularly updates this guidance as new information becomes available, so please review it often. This CDC guidance outlines strategies for child care programs to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and maintain safe operations. Many child care programs serve children who are not yet eligible for vaccination. Therefore, the CDC guidance emphasizes using multiple prevention strategies together, including vaccination of staff, families and eligible children, to protect people. The guidance is intended to help programs select appropriate, layered prevention strategies.

**As a reminder, masking is still required in child care settings for every person age two and older.** See <https://ocfs.ny.gov/programs/childcare/provider-letters/2021/Dear-Provider-2021Sep16-Emergency-Face-Covering-Regulation.pdf>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Janice Molnar". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Janice M. Molnar, Ph.D., Deputy Commissioner  
Division of Child Care Services