

Background

The Early Learning Alliance Network received a request for translation of current guidance into question as considerations as early learning providers re-open.

Process

The Early Learning Alliance Network vetted resources from the Center for Disease Control, American Academy of Pediatrics, NAEYC, and Child Care Aware to develop this document. Please use this as a “*for consideration*” resource and consult your local authorities, legal-council, and insurance providers before finalizing your plans to reopen during the Spring/Summer of 2020. This document has been created in response to COVID-19 impacting childcare professionals in the early part of 2020 and should not be used as anything but a summary of recommendations and points of guidance that were taking directly from the resources listed above.

Findings

The following provides an overview of resources for your consideration. These resources are organized around two key areas including:

1. Considerations before reopening,
2. COVID-19 plans policies, and
3. COVID-19 policies.

During this time there is a great deal of new information becoming available daily, while we are using the most up to date information possible please do your due diligence as you plan for your individual organizations’ response to COVID-19.

Considerations before reopening

As the impact of COVID-19 continues here are key considerations we would suggest early learning providers take some time to reflect and respond to. Links are provided to support guidance and/or recommendations when available. The main question we know so many are struggling to answer right now is “*should I reopen.*” To help in answering that question we suggest the following.

- a. Complete the decision guide provided by the Center for Disease Control, this document will ask you a series of questions that you should be able to answer privately with a Yes or No. You can access the decision guidance document for child care at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Childcare-Decision-Tree.pdf> In addition you can access the decision guide for summer programs/camps at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/Camps-Decision-Tree.pdf>

- b. Check in with the organization that provides your insurance coverage. Key questions to ask include: Are you covered during a pandemic? Are there any stipulations you have to meet in order to remain covered during a pandemic or to ensure that (especially for liability coverage) you have met their expectations in policies and practices?
- c. Make decisions about how COVID-19 might impact your regular operating procedures including recess, meals, naps, drop off/pick up, etc. Make sure to include in your plans how you will or will not hold festivals, holiday events, or special performances in person with several families and groups of children in one confined space. Leverage technology in any way that you can so that you can limit unnecessary interactions.
- d. Consider what your expectations for staff will be in using personal protective equipment, and encourage the use of face coverings by staff whenever they go into public to ensure that they are keeping themselves and the children/families they serve safe.
- e. Consider if you will require staff, families, visitors, and/or guardians to sign a waiver informing them of your expectations for proactive measures and expected actions if those expectations are not followed by families and/or staff. Consider with your leadership and/or legal counsel what waivers should include in the text.

COVID-19 plans

Each state has their own set of expectations for reopening. To provide global guidance is difficult, however across state lines the following seem to be consistent needs for planning and setting policies. Remember that the CDC guidance for child care is available online at

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

It may be required (or at the very least advantageous) to have a specific COVID-19 plan on record for your organization. You can see our template for early learning providers [here](#). A plan for addressing COVID-19 should address any specific needs in your state. The following offer possible items to include.

1. How are you advancing cleaning protocols?

- a. Do you know and are you using the typical national standards for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting educational facilities? (These can found online at <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.3>).
- b. Are you using a typical cleaning schedule as a basis for improvement? (See an example online at <https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AppendixK.pdf>).
- c. Are you using cleaning supplies that are approved by the Environmental Protection Agency specifically for use with COVID-19?(You can find a searchable database of cleaners and disinfectants online at <https://www.epa.gov/pesticide-registration/list-n-disinfectants-use-against-sars-cov-2>).

- d. Are you making sure that you and staff read the directions on any cleaners, follow guidance for pre-cleaning and contact time (how long cleaners need to be in place to actually work)?
- e. Have you thought critically about the ventilation when cleaning? (read labels carefully and be cognizant that you will be cleaning more thoroughly and more often during COVID-19 plans).
- f. Do you have plans in place to ensure that you are cleaning toys, ensuring safe bedding at your location, and thinking about how you might store bedding for each child separately? Are you following guidance on when bedding and cots or mats should be disinfected?
- g. Are you making sure that staff are following guidance on wearing gloves and washing hands?
- h. Do you have a plan in place for after cleaning is complete and how gloves and other items are removed?

2. Handwashing and hygiene procedures

- a. Are you considering the recommendations for various ages and use of hand sanitizers?
- b. Have you reviewed guidance on hand sanitizer specifically online at <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.2.2.5>?
- c. Have you considered the use of single-use paper towels?
- d. Have you thought about what soap you will have available?
- e. Have you reviewed recommendations around the use bar soap or antibacterial soap? (see specific suggestions online at <https://nrckids.org/CFOC/Database/3.2.2.2>).
- f. Have you thought of creative ways to help staff and children be sure that they are washing their hands thoroughly? Keep in mind that some organizations have suggested that you sing Happy Birthday two times while lathering hands with soap.
- g. Have you considered the possibility to reorganize facilities so that individuals can use paper towels to turn off faucets and open doors for exit?
- h. Have you thought about creative, child-friendly ways (i.e., a how-to poster or practice scenario to use with kids) to encourage effective hand washing?

3. Social distancing practices for families, children, and staff

- a. Have you considered social distancing options for children?
 - i. Have you considered how your facilities or programs can be adjusted so that children remain in small, consistent groups?
 - ii. Have you considered the grouping the children of healthcare workers/first responders together?
 - iii. Have you considered how your facilities or programs can limit the movement of children from one room to another?
 - iv. Have you considered how your facilities or programs can limit access to playground and common areas so that only one group of children at a time are using those areas?

- v. Have you considered how effective cleaning happens in common areas between groups of students?
 - vi. Have you reviewed guidance on social distancing during nap and during meal-times? Avoid circle time or close all group activities.
 - vii. Have you considered the possibility of having the same adults with the same children daily?
- b. Pick-up and drop off considerations
- i. Have you considered using staggered times for pick up and drop off?
 - ii. Have you thought through the possible use of curbside drop off?
 - iii. Do you have a plan in place so that temperature and health screening can take place before children enter the facility?
 - iv. Have you considered ways to limit interactions of parents/adults?
 - v. Have you set guidance for parents/families around establishing a consistent individual for dropping off or picking up children?
 - vi. Have you considered how you might suggest to families that older adults that are in high-risk groups not participate in drop off or pick up?
 - vii. Have you considered the possibilities of outdoor check-in for children? Have you thought through the details of shared pens or keyboards for sign-in?
 - viii. Have you thought about how you might provide access to hand hygiene stations upon entry to your building?

4. Health screening processes for families, children, and staff

- a. Have you considered how you might follow the guidance of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) to take the temperature of all children and staff at the time of arrival?
- i. Have you thought through how you can implement into your daily practices the recommendations from the Center for Disease Control that “Persons who have a fever of 100.4 or above or other signs of illness should not be admitted”?
 - ii. Do you have a plan in place for communicating with families about how they can be alert for signs of illness in their children?
 - iii. Do you have a plan in place for when families should keep children home when they are sick?
 - iv. Have you carefully review the protections summarized by the [CDC](#) that include:
 1. Social distancing
 2. Barrier or partitions
 3. Personal Protective Equipment?
 - v. Do you have a plan in place for how you will keep a record of daily checks? Remember that the AAP provides an example as a record sheet for staff and children, this example document can be found online at <https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AppendixF.pdf>
 - vi. Have you thought through how you might institute daily screening for families with basic questions about contact and symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath, etc.). Be sure to check the CDC symptoms online for updated

information at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

- vii. Share general guidelines from the CDC for avoiding close contact
 1. Wear a face covering (cover mouth and nose)
 2. Stay 6 feet away from others
 3. Do not gather in groups
 4. Stay out of crowded spaces
 5. Wash hands after contact
- b. Continuous health screening for staff.**
- i. Do you have plans in place for how you will keep confidential records from health screening?
 - ii. Have you reviewed the suggestions for temperature taking and screening prior to entry?
 - iii. Have you provided written plans and communicated those plans to all staff regarding how they will be screened and how records will be kept?
 - iv. Have you thought about how you can communicate expectations for staff regarding contact with others who have tested positive for COVID-19?
 - v. Have you reviewed the general guidelines from the CDC for avoiding close contact?
 1. Wear a face covering (cover mouth and nose)
 2. Stay 6 feet away from others
 3. Do not gather in groups
 4. Stay out of crowded spaces
 5. Wash hands after contact
 - vi. Have you set clear expectations for personal protective equipment during drop off and pick up, or other interactions directly with family and staff and/or other children?
 - vii. Have you considered how you can help support families and staff with reminders placing reminders and guidance outside of your facility?
 - viii. How are you upholding expectations for current policies around vaccines or other health care expectations?
 - ix. Have you reviewed the guidance for confirmed cases of COVID-19 specifically for schools or child care that can be found online at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>
- c. Do you have your COVID-19 plan posted on your website and/or publicly available to visitors? Keep in mind that if posting your plans online it might be helpful plans be posted in text rather than an actual document so that your plan can be easily translated by families with possible language barriers via a web browser.

COVID-19 related policies

Think through the policies that you have in place and how those policies may need to be adapted given the impact of COVID-19. You may consider the following.

1. How will you adjust employee sick days (Can you clarify extended leave and any specific situations where exposure may be related to work)?
2. How will you respond to employee fear of returning to work (Can you clarify how you will support and communicate with employees that are fearful of returning to work).
3. How will you adjust current policies around cancelled days due to expected exposure or necessary additional cleaning/disinfecting days?
4. How will you adjust (for both families and staff) to closures do to stay at home orders or other state/government issued responses to COVID-19?
5. How will you address reimbursement for unused days of care that were paid for by families?
6. Have you communicated your plans for at home learning opportunities on days when physical locations are closed? Have you included costs and fees associated with those plans?
7. Have you set clear policies regarding communication and confidentiality regarding risk of exposure or contact tracing/reporting of contact?

Final notes

Remember that this is a bit of uncharted waters. As a business and childcare/early education provider please check with local authorities and others to ensure that you are meeting the demands of licensing, health departments, etc.

As an organization we value your commitment to young children and their families, seeing childcare/early education as an essential component of our economy, long-term success of our kids, and our communities. During these past months it has become increasingly obvious (more than ever before) that you are creative, committed, and compassionate professionals. Please funnel that creativity and commitment into how you will address the issues facing us with COVID-19.

All of us need your organizations to thrive, and we thank you for all you do.