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Interim Guidance for Childcare Providers

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Note: This is Interim Guidance pending updated Child Care Guidance from U.S. CDC. This document incorporates current source documents from U.S. CDC, Maine CDC, and Maine's COVID-19 Response websites, and aligns with Maine DOE guidance.

Updates can be found on the [OCFS COVID Response Page](#)

The Department of Health and Human Services recognizes the vitally important role of childcare providers for Maine's children, their parents, and employers. The Department has updated this guidance document to provide clear guidelines in order to ensure the health and safety of staff and children. This guidance is applicable both to providers that have continued to operate and those that closed temporarily and are re-opening. Providers should follow these guidelines, as well as continuing to monitor US and Maine CDC guidance. The recommendations regarding COVID-19, including the prevention of transmission, continue to evolve as experts learn more about the virus. As a result, this document and the guidance contained within it are subject to change. Please note the areas of guidance in this document that have changed are identified by the section header **highlighted in yellow**, as well as the specific guidance updates/changes identified in **red**.

Please notify your staff, your Child Care Licensing Specialist, and families as soon as possible of any confirmed cases of COVID-19 while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and other applicable federal and state privacy laws.

Please notify Maine CDC when there are **five or more** positive cases at your facility. It is no longer required to contact with CDC with each case at your childcare facility. Call Maine CDC with any questions at Maine CDC: 1-800-821-5821

Please check the [Maine CDC COVID -19 Frequently Asked Questions](#) for frequent updates.

COVID-19 Vaccination

Children ages 5 and older are now eligible to get a COVID-19 vaccine. Maine residents age 5+ are strongly encouraged to make an appointment at a vaccination site as soon as possible.

[Info sheet: 5 reasons to Vaccinate your child & What to expect Before, During & After Vaccination](#)

COVID -19 vaccination sites in Maine can be found at:
<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/vaccines/vaccination-sites>

OCFS continues to encourage the vaccination of staff members and implementing recommended practices as contained in this guidance, to prevent the spread of COVID -19. Booster shots are now available for Maine residents age 12+. Refer to the US CDC guidance for [Who Can Get a Booster Shot](#) for more information.

Please refer to the Maine CDC for an [updated FAQ on vaccines and boosters](#).

Mask Use

As recommended by the Maine CDC, it is strongly encouraged for child care programs who are not currently masking to implement the use of face coverings for staff and children age 2 and up. Although it is not required, due to substantial transmission in all counties in Maine, face coverings are recommended indoors regardless of vaccination status.

- Masks should NOT be worn by children under age 2 or anyone who has trouble breathing. Face coverings should not be put on babies and children under age 2 because of the danger of suffocation.
- Masks should not be worn at rest time, meal time, or during swimming activities.

For the latest US CDC guidance regarding masks, visit [Omicron Variant: What You Need to Know](#) .

Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

In addition to masking, the recommended practices below for staff and families assist in the prevention of COVID -19. Using many of the following prevention strategies at the same time can lower the risk of transmission of COVID-19 in your child care program.

- Stay home when sick.
- Continue [daily screening procedures](#) for children, staff and parents.
- When possible, in multi-site child care programs limit staff working at more than one site.
- [Wash hands frequently](#).
- Develop a [schedule](#) for increased frequency of routine cleaning of high-touch surfaces.
- Avoid shared objects when possible.
- Limit the use of communal spaces or ensure proper disinfection in between groups.
- Stagger use of outdoor play areas when possible and disinfect between use.
- Limit mixing between groups such that there is minimal or no interaction between groups or cohorts.

- Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations or offer virtual events.
- Ensure [State of Maine travel guidance](#) is being followed by staff and families.
- [Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#).

Actions to take when someone has COVID-19

- Isolate the sick child or staff member if they are present at the program and **follow steps outlined in [Maine CDC isolation guidance](#)**.
- Notify your Child Care Licensing Specialist.
- Notify Maine CDC when there are **five or more** positive cases at your facility.
- Identify close contacts and notify families of potential exposure **and follow steps outlined in [Maine CDC quarantine guidance](#)**.
- Determine, in conjunction with the Maine CDC and your Child Care Licensing Specialist, if a full or partial closure of the program is necessary.
- Clean and disinfect all child care spaces according to CDC guidance.

Quarantine and isolation requirements

Maine CDC issued guidance for situations where someone in a child care program, including staff, volunteers, service providers, household members in home-based programs, and any other person who has contact with children, is exposed to COVID-19 through a close contact or tests positive for the virus that causes COVID-19. Please visit [Maine CDC COVID-19 Isolation/Quarantine Guidance for Child Care Settings](#) for isolation and quarantine guidance for child care settings. For isolation of children under the age of 5 who are not eligible for vaccines, please follow the isolation guidance for “If positive for COVID-19 or symptomatic, regardless of vaccination status” and for quarantine use “If exposed to COVID-19 and are NOT up-to-date on COVID-19 vaccinations.” Additionally, for children under 2 years of age who should not mask, follow the quarantine guidance for “If exposed to COVID-19 AND CANNOT wear a well-fitted mask.”

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

The child care facility should ensure there is a plan for people ending isolation or quarantine and undergoing the 5 additional days of masking. For up to date general guidelines regarding

isolation and quarantine, refer to <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/quarantine-isolation.html>.

Quarantine

- For someone who had close contact (not fully vaccinated): Stay home for 5 days after your last contact with someone who has COVID-19, test on day 5, and continue to mask around others for an additional 5 days. A negative test result does not get you out of quarantine.
- If not able to properly mask, which includes children under age 2, remain in quarantine for at least 10 days.
- During times in the day when children or staff members may typically remove masks indoors (such as during naptime, lunches, snacks, etc.), childcare facilities should have a plan for them to adequately distance from others and ensure they wear their masks when not actively participating in these activities (such as when they are not actively eating).

[Maine CDC COVID-19 Isolation/Quarantine Guidance for Child Care Settings](#)

Isolation

- For someone who tested positive for COVID-19: Stay home until you meet the criteria for release from isolation.
- For symptomatic individuals: Stay home for 5 days from the start of symptoms with the exception of seeking medical care and testing. Call before going to see a healthcare provider and let them know you are symptomatic.

[Maine CDC COVID-19 Isolation/Quarantine Guidance for Child Care Settings](#)

For questions concerning DOE guidance for quarantine and isolation, visit the [Standard Operating Procedures \(SOP\) for Positive COVID-19 Cases in Schools](#).

Department Supplied Rapid Antigen (Ag) Test

Currently, BinaxNOW remains an available option within child care facilities for use for screening asymptomatic employees who have been identified as a close contact to a COVID-19 positive case. Additional Antigen test options will become available as the Department expands the rapid testing capability.

If you are interested, you should complete the following steps:

1. Complete the Application for the CLIA Waiver: (detailed instructions are on page 6/16 of the guidance document linked below): <https://www.cms.gov/Regulations-and-Guidance/Legislation/CLIA/Downloads/HowObtainCertificateofWaiver.pdf>
2. Identify the staff member who will administer the testing, and have this staff member complete the BinaxNOW Online training: <https://www.globalpointofcare.abbott/en/support/product-installation-training/navica-brand/navica-binaxnow-ag-training.html>
3. Apply for the BinaxNOW Ag Cards using the Maine DHHS online application form: https://forms.office.com/Pages/ResponsePage.aspx?id=q6g_QX0gYkubzeoajy-GTseHDczroMNHqsaKj3vr645UNjFHU0NRR01UR0k5OTdBWEdaVk5DVjZFW54u
4. Register for the REDCap reporting system to report results from tests done in your facility: https://redcap.link/MECDC_POC_Registration

As a reminder, for more detailed instructions please reference the guidance document linked below:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/documents/Binax-Guidance.pdf>

Pooled Testing

The eligibility criteria for the Operation Expanded Testing (OET) program has expanded and pooled testing may be available to your child care program.

Pooled testing involves mixing several test samples together in a “batch” or “pool” and then testing the pooled sample with a PCR test for detection of SARS-CoV-2. If a pooled test result is negative, then all individuals within that pool are presumed negative and may remain in the facility. If a pooled test result is positive, then all individuals in the pool must be retested individually using an individual sample already collected. An individual identified as positive will need to isolate and close contacts will be identified.

For more information please visit [Operation Expanded Testing – Eurofins Clinical Enterprise](#)

For more information regarding COVID-19

- If you're looking for general information about COVID-19, call 211, text your zip code to 898-211, or email info@211maine.org.

Guidance for Child Care Programs

The following U.S CDC guidance was updated on November 10, 2021. The guidance outlines strategies that child care programs can use to maintain healthy environments and operations, lower the risk of COVID-19 spread in their programs, prepare for when someone is sick with COVID-19, and support coping and resilience.

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

The following US CDC guidance for schools was updated on January 6, 2022 to reflect new recommendations for isolation for people with COVID-19 and recommendations for people who have come into close contact with a person with COVID-19.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html#staying-home>

Additional Resources

Additional guidance related to COVID-19 more generally is available from the [US CDC](#) and the [Maine Department of Health and Human Services](#).

Testing Resources:

<https://www.maine.gov/covid19/restartingmaine/keepmainehealthy/testing>

Contact Tracing:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/contact-tracing.shtml>

Quarantine and Isolation information:

<https://www.maine.gov/dhhs/mecdc/infectious-disease/epi/airborne/coronavirus/covid.shtml>

COVID-19 Basics:

- [COVID-19 Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- [Latest COVID-19 Information](#)
- [Managing Stress and Coping](#)
- [Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

For Child Care Providers and Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers:

- [COVID-19-Quarantine-Flow-Chart.pdf \(maine.gov\)](#)
- [COVID-19-Isolation-Flow-Chart.pdf \(maine.gov\)](#)
- [Quick Guide: Help Protect Your Family Child Care Home from COVID-19](#)
- [Quick Guide: Help Protect Your Child Care Center from COVID-19 pdf](#)

- [Ventilation in Schools and Child Care Programs](#)
- [Guidance for Schools and Child Care Centers](#)
- [Guidance for Direct Service Providers, Parents, Caregivers, and Guardians, and People with Developmental and Behavioral Disorders](#)
- [Guidance for Direct Service Providers](#)
- [COVID 19 Ongoing Exposure: What if You Live with Your Close Contact?](#)
- [Pregnancy, Breastfeeding, and Caring for Newborns](#)

For Businesses and Workplaces:

- [HIPAA and COVID-19](#)
- [OSHA Guidance on Mitigating and Preventing the Spread of COVID-19 in the Workplace](#)
- [U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: Coronavirus and COVID-19](#)