

Frequently Asked Questions Concerning Child Care and COVID-19

At this time, we have not mandated any closures of child care facilities. We are not conducting inspections at this time and we have also postponed training through April. We are keeping in contact with our centers for updates on closures and answering questions as they come in. We are taking self-reports and providing technical assistance by phone and email. We are keeping track of the closures of facilities, so if you are closed and have not reported it or were closed and have reopened please contact your license official so they can update your status. We want you all to know that we are here to answer questions and provide technical assistance as needed. We want to encourage you to reach out to your licensing officials when you have a question or concern. Please continue to follow the guidelines from CDC, those on our webpage (www.healthhms.com), and those from your local officials. We are working hard to ensure that we make the best decisions for the children of Mississippi as we know you are as well. As we move forward, we will continue to assess the current situation and make changes as needed. We appreciate your patience and hard work during this time.

General

Q: If the local sheriff/police department is not allowing the general public to enter their locked gates to get fingerprinted what should a facility do for staff whose Letter of Suitability (LOS) is due to expire (not under their facility name)?

A: They will be allowed to continue working during this time. Once we return to normal operations all letters of suitability that must be renewed will need to be sent in to be processed.

Q: Will I be liable if a child or staff member at my facility gets COVID-19?

A: Please contact legal representation for guidance.

Q: Is testing for COVID-19 performed at county health departments?

A: Testing is not performed at your county health department. The public is encouraged to contact their physician or a healthcare provider.

Q: Where can I go to find the latest updates on information pertaining to COVID-19?

A: Mississippi State Department of Health and CDC posts updates and information at:
www.healthhms.com
www.cdc.gov

Q: Can my staff apply for unemployment while my facility is closed?

A: MSDH does not oversee labor laws. Please visit <https://mdes.ms.gov>

Q: Are there any resources available to help a provider who is staying open during this crisis?

A: Yes, please contact your license official to get information on resources.

Q: Should I make changes to my arrival and departure process?

A: Yes, parents are encouraged **not** to come into the facility. If possible, curbside pick up/drop off should be made available.

Q: Should I screen staff and children for illness? When?

A: Yes, screening can take place at arrival and can be done throughout the day as needed. Temperature checks and visual checks are a good way to screen for sickness.

Q: Can I have more than 10 children at my facility?

A: Please have no more than 10 people in each classroom (including the caregiver).

Q: Can I combine classes when we are low in different rooms?

A: Please keep classrooms stable and do not combine rooms at any point during the day. Start the day with the same children/caregiver in the classroom and end the day with the same children/caregiver.

Licensing

Q: Can I extend my hours so that I can help first responders that are required to work?

A: Contact your licensing official to check on possibly extending your hours. We will assist you with this process.

Q: Are we allowed to still charge tuition while we are closed?

A: That is a facility policy and is not regulated by MSDH.

Q: Do you know how long it will be before inspections start back?

A: We do not know a date at this time. We will provide information as it becomes available.

Q: What guidance should licensed centers follow to prepare them to operate in these conditions?

A: The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has guidelines for child care sites still operating at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

Q: Will license renewals be extended?

A: Renewals will be addressed on an individual basis as needed.

Q: Are you all providing special licenses to churches and other businesses that want to help provide care during this time?

A: No, we are not issuing any special licenses at this time.

Q: Due to the extreme changes in enrollment, should a facility that is due for renewal request a change to their capacity (which will affect fees)?

A: We do not recommend changing the capacity of the facility.

Q: Will the needed documentation for renewal of a license affect them getting their license i.e., fire form, menu, contact hours.

A: Needed documentation not received will not affect the license if impacted by the pandemic. These will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, and the licensing official will be in contact with the child care provider.

Q: How will you handle the facilities that need their renewal inspection?

A: Fortunately, we work 60-90 days ahead of the expiration date of a license. When we return to normal operations, we will work to complete the inspections in a timely manner and will deal with any concerns on a case-by-case basis. Contact your licensing official for any questions.

Q: May I use my youth camp as an emergency child care center for emergency responders?

A: You may submit a proposal for evaluation by the Childcare Division.

Q: Is the Division of Child Care Licensure conducting inspections at this time?

A: All inspections have been postponed at this time unless a Class I violation has been reported.

Closures

Q: Have child care facilities been mandated to close operations?

A: No. Child care facilities can decide at their own discretion whether they choose to stay open or close at this time. If they choose to close, the facility should contact their local licensing official and update the parents.

Q: What is the guidance for residential child care and in-home providers in terms of closure?

A: Residential child care and in-home providers should follow the same process as child care facilities.

Q: Why are child care facilities still permitted to remain open, while public schools are required to close?

A: The current requirements around closure only apply to public schools. Child care centers are private businesses and are not subject to the same closure requirements as public schools.

Q: What can staff and parents do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

A: Encourage staff and parents/children to stay home when sick; to appropriately cover coughs and sneezes; regularly clean and disinfect surfaces, and wash hands with soap and water often.

Nutrition

Q: Can we utilize services in our communities that are providing meals?

A: Yes, public schools and food sponsors across the state are offering meals for child care providers. Please check with local school districts for more information.

Q: Can I use juice if milk is unavailable in my area?

A: Milk is preferred, however, if unavailable juice can be used. Water is to be provided at all meals/snacks. Please check with other programs you may be doing business with (such as USDA) for their allowances.

Q: Is my center allowed to provide “Grab and Go” meals for our enrolled children?

A: Yes.

Q: Does my menu need to be approved by MSDH if I provide a “Grab and Go” meal?

A: No. However, providers should strive to provide a healthy “Grab and Go” meal.

Training

Q: Can online training be provided so that my staff can continue to receive their contact hours?

A: CC Licensure is not providing online training at this time; however, there are approved online training courses available. Check our website for more information on approved trainers.

<https://msdh.ms.gov/msdhsite/ static/30,0,183,437.html>

Q: May I conduct training using Zoom or some other similar platform where I can see the participants?

A: All online training must be approved through MSDH. Please submit your proposal and it will be reviewed.

Q: If I signed up for an MSDH training that was canceled, do I need to register again for the next available training?

A: Yes, please visit www.healthmys.com and look at our training calendar to register for the next training available.

Q: If my training was canceled will I be granted a grace period to complete the training?

A: Yes, please keep in contact with your licensing official to develop a plan to complete the training that is needed.

Q: When should I reregister for the training?

A: Go to www.healthmys.com to register for training that is available asap to secure your place in the class.