



## Updated COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care Programs

March 2, 2022

### **Purpose**

As current COVID-19 infections decline and vaccinations and natural immunity increase within the general population, Virginia is on a path toward normalcy. This guidance is for child care centers and family day homes. This document supersedes all previous guidance issued by the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE).

This guidance provides discretion so programs can work closely with parents to implement practices that best meet the needs of individual programs and their families. Guidance is not mandatory, and is not subject to enforcement by the Office of Child Care Health and Safety. The VDOE will continue to inspect regulated and licensed programs for health and safety requirements based on the [Code of Virginia](#) and in [regulation](#) (8VAC20-770 through 8VAC20-850, as appropriate).

Child care programs are encouraged to practice multiple prevention strategies and remain vigilant about changing conditions. The benefit of mitigation efforts must always be weighed against the cost to children's overall well-being. Here are key prevention strategies that child care programs in Virginia should consider:

### **1. Vaccinations**

- All child care staff are encouraged to get vaccinated. Employers should facilitate employees getting vaccinated.

### **2. Staying Home When Sick**

- Instruct any children, teachers, and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as influenza (flu) or COVID-19, to stay home and seek advice on testing and treatment from their physician.
- If a child becomes sick while in care, arrange for the child to be picked up, while the child waits in a separate isolation room/area.

### **3. Face Masks**

- As relates to staff, providers should refer to the [Virginia Department of Labor and Industry](#) (DOLI) standards and updates. Note that updated guidance will encourage employers to permit workers and customers the choice of whether to wear a mask, except as otherwise required by their employer or VOSH pursuant to Va. Code §40.1-51.1.A.



- On January 15, 2022, Governor Youngkin issued Executive Order Number Two (2022) and Order of Public Health Emergency One that rescinded a previous executive order and health order requiring masking of children in public and private school settings.
- On February 16, 2022, Governor Youngkin signed into law [SB739](#) which provides parents the right to opt-out of local school mask mandates on school property. The law also indicates that families do NOT have to provide a reason for opting out and students may NOT face consequences for not wearing masks. All school divisions in Virginia must comply by March 1, 2022.
- The rationale for these actions would be applicable in the child care setting. Programs are therefore encouraged to allow families to make choices about masking that best meet the needs of their children.
- Programs that accepted federal relief funding should follow the updated CDC guidance to the extent practicable AND provide parents the right to opt children out of mask mandates.
- Face masks should NEVER be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation. Face masks are NOT recommended for any child who is eating, drinking, sleeping, has trouble breathing, or is unable to remove without assistance.

Programs should contact their assigned licensing inspector or the [Office of Child Care Health and Safety](#) in their region with questions