

STAYING OPEN/CLOSURES

1. Am I required to close my program?

Per the Governor's directive, all child care programs are required to close unless they are serving essential persons. This directive is for all child care programs including licensed homes, registered homes, center-based, and afterschool programs.

2. Do I need to stay open if I provide care for essential persons normally?

You do not need to stay open if you normally provide care for essential persons, however we are asking child care programs to consider staying open to provide care for the children of essential persons. If you choose to remain open, please use the Department of Health guidance addressing this: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>

If it is not possible for your program to remain open and you have not previously notified our Division, please complete this form with an update:

<https://www.jotform.com/heather.mattison/licensing-covid19>. It would be helpful for you to clarify if you have staff who are willing to work in a child care program that is remaining open and/or if you would be willing to allow another program to operate in your licensed space.

If you must close, please have families that are essential persons and need alternative care complete this webform: <https://webportalapp.com/webform/essentialworkers>.

3. What happens for centers/homes that have already decided to close?

Programs that have already decided to close may remain closed. If your program is willing to reopen to provide care to essential persons, please notify any essential person families that have already been enrolled in your program and resume care for these families. If you have reopened please complete this form: <https://www.jotform.com/heather.mattison/licensing-covid19>. There is a place on the form for you to indicate if you are willing to enroll new children for essential persons, this will help us keep child care referral specialists up to date on availability of child care.

4. How will programs be selected to offer "emergency" care? Will they get more money?

CDD is collecting information from programs on their desire and availability to offer this critical service during this time through this form: <https://www.jotform.com/heather.mattison/licensing-covid19>.

Any program willing to stay open and provide services should complete this form. The Division is sharing the list of child care programs who are willing to

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enroll new children for essential persons with local child care referral specialists. Child care referral specialists will help connect families to these child care programs.

Information about financial supports is available at: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/covid-19>

5. If I am open, can I take children of non-essential persons?

No, during the COVID-19 closure period the Governor has mandated that child care should only be provided for essential persons' children. Child care programs should only be serving those on the essential persons' list.

6. If I am willing to stay open but do not have enough staff to maintain the recommended group sizes and ratios, can I use volunteers to provide supervision of children?

No, child care licensing regulations do not allow volunteers to be counted as staff in the staff:child ratios. In addition, Vermont Department of Health guidance for schools and child care programs states: "There should be no outside visitors and volunteers with the exception of employees or contracted service providers for the purpose of special education or required support services, as authorized by the school or district." The Vermont Department of Health guidance is available at <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>

Please contact the child care licensing unit (ahs.dfcddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov or 1-800-649-2642 option 3 and let us know if you need additional staff. We may be able to connect you with staff from another licensed child care program who are available and willing to work.

7. What if I reported that I closed my program and now I want to re-open? Or what if I reported my program as open and now, I am closing?

Please submit a new survey with all the required information using this link:

<https://www.jotform.com/heather.mattison/licensing-covid19>. The Division provides the child care referral specialists with this information regularly to help assist essential persons find child care.

If you have been open and are now closing, please provide this link to your families who meet the definition of essential persons so we can match them to an available program:

<https://webportalapp.com/webform/essentialworkers>. They can also call 2-1-1 extension 6. Let's Grow Kids is providing child care referral specialists with this information to help assist essential persons find child care.

8. **What if I am now at capacity and cannot enroll any additional children of essential persons?**

Please email the Division at ahs.dcfddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov and include your program's name, license certificate number, and town. We also would like to know how many staff you have that could work for another child care program and how many unused classrooms you have that you are willing to allow another child care program to use.

The Division will notify the local child care referral specialist that you are no longer enrolling new children for essential persons. The Division will work to connect available staff to other child care programs who need staff, and to inform other child care programs of your unused classrooms.

9. **What if I need to reduce my child care capacity?**

Please email the Division at ahs.dcfddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov and include your program's name, license certificate number, town, and the number and ages of children that will no longer be able to attend your program. Please let us know how many staff you have that could work for another child care program and how many unused classrooms you have that you are willing to allow another child care program to use.

The Division will notify the local child care referral specialist that you are reducing the number of children for essential persons you are caring for. The Division will also work to connect available staff to other child care programs who need staff and to inform other child care programs of your unused classrooms.

Please provide this link to the families who meet the definition of essential persons and will no longer be able to receive child care at your program:

<https://webportalapp.com/webform/essentialworkers>. They can also call 2-1-1 extension 6. The Division is providing the local child care referral specialist with this information regularly to help assist essential persons find child care.

10. **If a child care staff person was around a person who has a COVID pending test should the child care staff member continue to work in a child care program?**

The employee should monitor themselves for symptoms and stay home if they are sick. The program can remain open and employees can still provide care.

The guidance from the Vermont Department of Health outlines when children or employees should be excluded from child care programs. Guidance is available on the Vermont Department of Health website <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>. Questions about exclusion can also be directed to the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7240.

11. What happens if I get sick and need to close?

Child care programs are privately operated businesses and can make business decisions about closures. We are grateful to programs that have agreed to stay open for essential persons, however it is within your discretion to close. If you have to close please notify the Division by completing this form: <https://www.jotform.com/heather.mattison/licensing-covid19>.

Guidance about illness and closures is also provided by the Vermont Department of Health: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>

12. What do I do if someone (staff or child) tests positive for COVID-19?

Please contact the Department of Health right away if anyone in your child care program tests positive for COVID-19, and alert us so that we can help with child care placements in the event that your program needs to close due to such tests. They can be reached at: 802-863-7240.

If you plan to stay open following a confirmed case of COVID-19 in your program, please ensure the entire facility is fully disinfected prior to providing further care for families. Please refer to the guidance from the Vermont Department of Health regarding illness and closures:

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>

13. I operate a registered child care program and I am 65 years old or older, may I continue to provide child care for essential persons? // If I have a staff member who is 65 years old or older, can that person continue to provide child care for essential persons?

Individuals of this age are at significantly higher risk of getting the coronavirus and to have more serious health impacts from the virus. You should not be providing child care for essential persons. Thank you for your service, however please use this time to protect yourself. Please see the Vermont Department of Health information for older Vermonters and people with chronic conditions: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/frequently-asked-questions>.

Learn more about financial supports available for child care programs here:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/covid-19>.

You or your staff person may also qualify for benefits from DCF's Economic Services Division. If you have children living with you, information about benefits is available at:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/benefits/>

14. What types of variances may I be eligible for?

There are a variety of reasons you may need to request a variance right now. The following are the most common:

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- You would like to provide child care to children of ages not approved on your license. (CBCCPP rule 2.3.11.1. Not applicable to ASP and FCCH.)
- You would like to allow one or more of your staff members to care one-on-one for an Essential Person's child(ren) in either your staff member's home or the home of the Essential Person under your license; or you are a FCCP and would like to care for an Essential Person's child(ren) in their own home instead of in your FCCH (ASP rule 18.8, CBCCPP rule 2.3.2.3, and FCCH rule 2.3.2.3).
- A fellow child care provider has unused classrooms and is willing to allow you to use their space (ASP rule 18.8, and CBCCPP rule 2.3.2.3. Not applicable to FCCH).
- You have found a place to provide child care in another town (ASP rule 18.8 and CBCCPP rule 2.3.2.3. Not applicable to FCCH).
- Your program director may not be able to be present the required amount of time at your child care program (ASP rule 5.24 and CBCCPP rule 6.2.4.1. Not applicable to FCCH).

Submit a variance through your program's BFIS account (see "Child Care Licensing Variances" guidance on the Division's website: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/childcare/providers/bfis>). If you need assistance on how to enter a variance, please contact the Licensor on Duty at ahs.dcfddchildcarelicensing@vermont.gov or 800-649-2642 option 3. Either a Licensor or Child Care Business Technician will follow-up with you and provide assistance. The Division will expedite these types of variances to support child care needs for essential persons.

ESSENTIAL PERSONS

15. Who is considered an essential person? How will families be designated as needing child care?

Childcare is available for those who have been deemed essential to the COVID-19 response. Workers in critical businesses and who are working out of the home and do not have other options are eligible for child care.

Individuals should self-assess whether they meet the definition of an Essential Person according to the Governor's Executive Order governing childcare during the closure period:

*"Essential Persons" are employees of businesses and entities providing services or functions deemed critical to public health and safety, as well as economic and national security as described in Stay Home/Stay Safe and supplemental guidance issued by the Agency of Commerce and Community Development; **provided, however, child care being provided to Essential Persons during the State of Emergency shall only be utilized by Essential Persons (a) when there is no parent, guardian or other arranged care in the home to care for the child; or (b) in the event of exigent circumstances necessary for the health and safety of the child.** Further, in the event of child care capacity constraints, the children of healthcare providers and other essential healthcare system employees, first responders and essential government*

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employees with primary responsibility for execution of the COVID-19 response shall receive priority placement.

After self-assessing, Vermonters can self-certify their status as Essential Persons on a [form available from CDD](#) and bring this form to an open childcare provider for service. (Please note that this form has 2 versions. Either version is acceptable at this time.) Child care providers and CDD will accept the self-assessment and self-certification of Essential Persons.

Information on essential persons that are able to use child care services is available at: <https://vem.vermont.gov/essentialpersons>

This list may change over time regarding the groups of people that will be considered “essential” and able to use child care services. The above guidance will be updated as this situation unfolds. This information will also be available publicly on our website here: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/covid-19>

16. Are foster parents or children with an open DCF case included in the list of essential persons that child care should still be provided for?

Yes, children that are in foster care are included in the list of essential persons. This includes children that have an open case with the Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF), Family Services Division (FSD) where child care is part of their safety plan. If you need confirmation on a particular family, please reach out to your CIS Specialized Child Care Coordinator: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/partners/scc>.

HEALTH AND SAFETY:

17. What can we do to prevent the virus from spreading?

This is the season for common respiratory illnesses like colds and flu. Taking everyday actions to stop the spread of germs will keep us all safe. Follow the Vermont Department of Health guidelines for child care providers: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>

18. Where to go for health-related questions about COVID-19?

Guidance is available from the Vermont Department of Health at: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>. This guidance will be updated as needed and as we learn more about Vermont’s experience with COVID-19. If you have questions that go beyond what is available in the guidance, please call 802-863-7240 to be connected to the maternal and child health nurses in our

public health system.

19. If parents have kept medication at the child care program for use, such as an epi pen, should they be given back to the parent if the program is closed?

Prescription medications should be returned to parents if the child is no longer attending your child care. If this is not possible, please notify the parent of the expiration date on the medication. Parents will need this information to determine whether they need to replace any prescription medication when their child returns to your child care.

20. Child Care providers want to serve families of essential persons, but they are worried about their exposure. Will any steps be taken to help protect them?

Revised guidance that is intended to reduce the risk of exposure was provided by the Vermont Department of Health: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/response/coronavirus-covid-19/schools-and-child-care-programs>

21. Do child care programs need to still test our water for lead during this time?

Vermont Department of Health and/or your Child Care Business Technician will let you know if you need to complete an initial, diagnostic and/or post-remediation lead water test. Steps have been taken to minimize the need for testing at this time.

Please continue to report remediation plans to your Child Care Business Technician, so your efforts are noted on the public website.

22. I'm enrolling new children for essential persons, what is the minimum paperwork I need to collect?

You will need to have parents complete your typical enrollment form, or you may use the one provided by the Division on our website (<https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/forms-child-care-providers>) titled "Child Admission / Registration Form (Sample)." You also need to collect immunization information. It is important for you to know which children are not current on their vaccinations in order to best protect these children should someone have a vaccinated condition.

The Vermont Department of Health has information and resources regarding immunization requirements on their website: <https://www.healthvermont.gov/immunizations-infectious-disease/immunization/child-care-school-providers>. Child care providers may also register to participate in the Vermont Immunization Registry (<https://www.healthvermont.gov/health-statistics-vital-records/registries/immunization>). With written parental consent, child care

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providers can obtain a current copy of a child's immunization record through the Vermont Immunization Registry.

In place of collecting general child health exam documentation from a child's pediatrician, you must have the parent report any medical condition(s) and/or allergies on the enrollment form. You must also collect any medication required to be given to the child while in child care and get written parental permission to give the medication to the child per the instructions on the prescription label. The Division's website has a sample form that can be used for written parental permission: <https://dcf.vermont.gov/cdd/forms-child-care-providers>, the form is titled "Medication Permission Form (Sample)."

23. Do I have to count my household members and/or own children in my registered FCCH along with the number of child care children?

If your household members and/or your own children have the ability to practice social distancing (a minimum of 6 feet) between the child care children and the household member(s), then you do not need to count them in the total of 10 persons allowed by Vermont Department of Health guidance. In this situation, when children are present, the household member(s) and/or your own children would remain in rooms separate from the child care children.

If your FCCH is set-up in a manner in which social distancing can't be practiced between the child care children and your household members and/or your own children, then you do need to count them in the total of 10 persons allowed by Vermont Department of Health guidance.

24. What should I do if I cannot have children outside for the same length of time I normally do because I must limit the outside play area to one group of children at a time?

Ensuring social distancing between the different groups of children is important. You will still be in compliance with required child care licensing regulations related to outside time if each group of children has 30 minutes of outside time in the morning and again in the afternoon.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

25. Can online training opportunities count for professional development and can they be entered into my Quality and Credential Account in the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS)?

In response to the social distancing required as part of COVID-19 prevention and mitigation, the Division has temporarily authorized approved sponsors of professional development in Vermont to offer trainings to early childhood and afterschool professionals in real time via online methods. Information about the criteria is available on the Northern Lights at CCV website:

<https://northernlightscv.org/training/online-real-time-training-criteria/>

26. What if my CPR and Pediatric First Aid training expires, and I need to take it?

It is critical during this time for you and staff to be trained in the life saving techniques of CPR and Pediatric First Aid. As a result, the regulatory requirement for staff to complete this training and to remain certified continues. However, in-person options have been canceled due to social distancing guidance. To ensure you and your staff continue to receive this training, the online training criteria has been waived for trainings completed in March, April, May, and June. Online only CPR and Pediatric First Aid trainings that have been completed in March, April, May, or June 2020 will be accepted and will be entered and verified in your BFIS Quality and Credential Account by Northern Lights at CCV.

This also applies to new staff (permanent and/or temporary) that do not have certification in CPR and Pediatric First Aid. It is critical during this time for all staff to be trained in these life saving techniques. The online training criteria has also been waived for any new staff (permanent and/or temporary) who complete CPR and Pediatric First Aid in March, April, May, and June 2020. These trainings will be entered and verified in your BFIS Quality and Credential Account by Northern Lights at CCV.

27. How will I complete the licensing regulation training required as part of the Fundamentals for Early Childhood Professionals course?

Instructors will have information for you on how to complete this session of this course while we are required to practice social distancing.

28. Do my newly hired staff need to complete an orientation training and a training about child abuse and neglect?

During a time period where there is a lot of emergency child care being provided to essential persons and children and staff are not well known to one another, it is more important than ever for newly hired staff to be oriented to your program's policies and procedures, to complete a training that meets the orientation requirement (per ASP rule 5.31 and CBCCPP and FCCH rules 7.1.3), and to complete a training about child abuse and neglect.

The training on child abuse and neglect, "Protecting Vermont's Children: Reporting Abuse and Neglect", is an online training available at:

<https://dcf.vermont.gov/protection/reporting/mandated>. When staff have completed this training, they will need to use the Northern Lights at CCV "Verification Cover Sheet" (https://dcf.vermont.gov/sites/dcf/files/CDD/Forms/pd_verification_form.pdf) to submit their completion certificate. Once received, Northern Lights staff will document completion of this training in the staff member's BFIS Quality and Credential Account.

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The orientation training, "Better Kid Care: Vermont Orientation", is also an online training that is available at: <https://extension.psu.edu/programs/betterkidcare/on-demand>. Once a month, Better Kid Care sends documentation of who have successfully completed this training to Northern Lights at CCV who will enter staff's BFIS Quality and Credential Accounts. Please be sure that staff know their BFIS Quality and Credential Account number as this is needed when they enroll in the training.

OTHER CONCERNS

29. How will families get the food they need?

Families can call 2-1-1 for available local resources to meet their basic needs including food resources. Several schools are also offering food programs regardless of closure.

30. What is the role of the schools?

On March 26, 2020, Governor Scott directed school districts to make preparations for a transition to Continuity of Learning for the remainder of the school year. Information about the role of schools can be found on the Agency of Education's COVID-19 webpage:

<https://education.vermont.gov/news/covid-19-guidance-vermont-schools>

31. Am I expected to complete my upcoming program license renewal application?

As of 3/24/2020, Child Care Business Technicians issued license extensions for child care licenses due to expire in March, April and May of 2020. The extensions moved the expiration date to 11/21/2020. A letter and an updated license certificate have been issued. These documents are accessible in the "Document" section of a program's BFIS account.

You will receive a license renewal notice in your program's BFIS account 60-days prior to 11/21/2020 which will prompt you to complete your license renewal application.

During the week of 3/30/2020, Child Care Business Technicians issued license extensions for child care licenses due to expire in June and July of 2020, moving their expiration dates to 1/30/2021. A letter and an updated license certificate have been issued. These documents are accessible in the "Document" section of a program's BFIS account.

You will receive a license renewal notice in your program's BFIS account 60-days prior to 1/30/2021 which will prompt you to complete your license renewal application.

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32. Do I still need to have staff complete fingerprinting?

Child Care Business Technicians are continuing to process background clearances. As such, you should continue to submit Record Check Authorization forms and/or FCCH Census forms either by mail or by email. If a staff member or household member is required to submit fingerprinting, you may wait to have them complete this requirement after the Governor's social distancing order has ended.

33. What steps do I need to take if I am willing to provide 2nd and/or 3rd shift care?

Please work with your Licensor to receive the required approval.