Alameda County Public Health Department Guidance for Child Care and Preschool Programs: Novel Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) March 19, 2020

Alameda County Public Health provided Guidance for Child Care and Preschool Settings in Alameda County regarding the Novel Coronavirus. At this time, Alameda County Public Health has not recommended school closures, and our Health Officer order only calls for school dismissals. However, in this ever-changing situation we support the need for childcare providers to make decisions about maintaining operations with additional measures in place to prevent spread of disease or closing.

One of our primary goals is to protect Alameda’s significant population of seniors and those with chronic illnesses, and that attack rate in children is low from data available from China.

This advisory addresses childcare including family child care programs, daycare, preschools, child care, and before care & after-school programs. For infants and toddlers, care will be prioritized at sites equipped for the care of infants and toddlers.

We recognize that: 1) some childcare facilities may continue to assemble small groups of students and that 2) some families will need to make alternate childcare arrangements, which can be challenging in this environment.

We recommend childcare administrators and staff review U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance for school settings. The following guidelines are intended to reduce the chance of COVID-19 exposure in these situations:

1. **Ideally, child care should be provided in the child’s home, by household members, without exposure to other children or ill individuals.**

2. **Group child care should be prioritized for use by essential service employees and those who would otherwise not be able to work.**

3. **Group child care should:**
   a. Be in stable groups of 12 or fewer children (“stable” means that the same 12 or fewer children are in the same group each day). Children should not change from one group to another. The smaller the group, the better, but up to 12 is acceptable.
   b. If more than one group of children is cared for at one facility, each group should be in a separate room, if possible. Groups should not mix with each other. For example: meals, playground time, and toileting activities should be separate for each group.
   c. Child care provider(s) should also remain solely with one group of children (providers should not move from group to group or room to room).
4. **Infection control measures:**

   a. Screen children and staff for fever or cough daily, before entering childcare.
   
   b. Exclude ill children and employees (those with fever or cough) from the facility.
   
   c. Any children or staff who develop symptoms should put on a surgical mask, enter a separate room, and be sent home as soon as possible.
   
   d. Ill children or staff should not return to work or childcare until they are well.
   
   e. Children and staff should wash hands with soap and water or use alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol (if hands are not visibly dirty) before and after eating, drinking, touching eyes/nose/mouth, toileting or diapering, and physical contact with each other.
   
   f. Clean high-contact areas and surfaces frequently, using 10% bleach solution or EPA-approved disinfectant, including counters, toys, telephones, and doorknobs. See California Environmental Protection Agency’s [guidance on using disinfectants at schools and child cares](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx).
   
   g. Staff and children should practice good respiratory hygiene including coughing/sneezing into sleeve and covering coughs.

During this time, parents should keep children home if they are sick until a fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine; seek medical care immediately if symptoms, such as a high fever or difficulty breathing, become more severe; cover coughs with a sleeve or tissue; keep tissues and “no touch” trash cans close by; wash hands often and keep soap dispensers filled; clean frequently touched surfaces routinely; and if desired, wear a face mask if you are coughing or sneezing. In addition, the CDC has released guidelines for creating a household plan of action related to the virus.

**Additional Information**

World Health Organization (WHO) [https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus](https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus)


California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx](https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx)


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