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Division of Family Services - Office of Child Care Licensing

Guidance for child care providers as of June 22, 2020

The following are questions (Q) and answers (A) that staff from the Office of Child Care Licensing (OCCL), the Delaware Institute for Excellence in Early Childhood (DIEEC), and government agencies received after recent provider calls. We hope you find this information helpful. Please contact your licensing specialist with any questions.

The Office of Child Care Licensing

1. Q: If a child care worker cannot wear a mask for health reason, do they need a doctor's note and can they still provide care?

A: If a worker states he/she has a medical condition that makes wearing a face covering difficult, the individual does not have to wear a face covering. Details regarding any medical condition are not required nor is documentation from a health care provider required. If they cannot wear a face covering, you may wish to require more frequent temperature checks or other means to ensure the staff person is healthy. Also, perhaps the worker would consider wearing a face shield instead of a mask, as this shouldn't restrict breathing.

2. Q: Do I need to wear my face covering when I am outside with the children?

A: If you are in close contact with the children, interacting with them, helping them on/off play equipment, then YES. If you are off to the side, maintaining social distancing while outdoors with children, then you may remove the face covering. However, you must have it with you so you can put it in place when you are close to children.

3. Q: If the children are napping and the provider is more than 6 feet away (cleaning, sitting, etc.), can they take their face covering off?

A: According to guidance provided by Public Health, yes, in general, if the provider is able to maintain a 6 feet distance, the mask may be removed. Nap time is a good time for removal or a break from the mask since the children are more stationary (hopefully), but Public Health would encourage providers to have the mask at the ready to be put on if needed to respond to a child.

4. Q: Are families able to enter a facility in order to pick up/drop off children?

A: It is preferred that children are met outside the facility by staff and the health screening completed outdoors in order to greatly reduce the number of persons actually entering the facility. However, based on additional guidance from public health, if there is a lobby or vestibule that is NOT part of a child care classroom, the screening may be done there. However, your goal should still be to reduce the number of people actually entering the building. Only staff and children may proceed to the classroom.

5. Q: I perform the health screening for staff and children each day as required. Do I need to record and keep this information?

A: This can be a verbal screening. There is no expectation that the screening results will be documented in writing in some way, unless the provider herself wishes to do so.

6. Q: How can we recruit new families if we have to maintain the same group of children?

A: The restriction on group size is anticipated to be temporary. If you have vacancies based on the reduced group size, then you can recruit additional children. Otherwise, increasing enrollment will have to wait until group size returns to the usual number.

7. Q: Can centers take school-age children on buses to locations that are open and that are practicing social distancing? How can children be safely transported?

A: Field trips are not expressly prohibited. Maintaining social distancing is the issue in taking children to other locations. Unless each family provides their own transportation, maintaining social distancing during the transporting of children is an issue as well as maintaining social distancing while at the site. Public Health has recommended that when transporting children on a school bus, for example, there should be one child per seat or alternating seats if possible. The proximity when being transported would increase the importance of masks being worn by those children that can wear them.

Drivers and other adults on the bus must be masked, hand sanitizer should be available, and the seats and other contact surfaces should be disinfected between groups. If one group is using the bus for a round trip, then Public Health recommends assigned seats and the bus be cleaned after the round trip is complete.

8. Q: If there is a sole provider in the family child care home, leaving children inside during drop off/pick up times to receive another child creates a safety concern. Without other staff, what is recommended?

A: Children may not be left alone without adult supervision, even for brief periods of time. The configuration of a family child care can differ greatly from home to home and the safety of all children in care must be the first consideration. Depending on the home, it may be necessary for a single family member for the child to come inside the family child care home by a few steps to bring the child to the provider.

9. Q: Will OCCL extend the permission for interns to supervise groups of children? With more children returning to the center, it will be harder to keep groups separate at the beginning and end of the day if we can only use credentialed staff.

A: **Modification to Regulation 24.K.1(c) Staffing; Early Childhood Intern:** Staff with a valid intern qualifications certificate issued by Delaware First who are at least 18 years of age, have at least one year of experience at the child care facility at which they are currently working, and have been determined eligible as a result of their comprehensive background check by the Criminal History Unit, may be alone with children **ages three years and older**. Documentation of age, experience, and eligibility must be on site in the employee's file. Staff qualifications for those working with infants and toddlers remain as found in DELACARE Regulations for Early Care and Education and School-Age Centers. Aides may not be alone with children at any time.

10. Q: My newly hired worker cannot get a fingerprinting appointment for several weeks and there is currently no facility accepting walk-ins. What can I do?

A: **Modification to Regulation 28.C General Qualifications:** A licensee shall ensure that a staff member **has a scheduled fingerprinting appointment** with Delaware State Police before the start of employment. This information shall be placed in the employee's file. The staff member with a fingerprinting appointment may begin work while being supervised at all times by a person who has completed the background check process and been determined eligible and qualified at least as an early childhood assistant teacher or school-age site assistant. No staff member may be alone with children until after DSCYF's Criminal History Unit reviews the comprehensive background check and determines their eligibility.

11. Q: May summer youth workers (youth participating in a work program with the City of Wilmington or City of Dover, for example) work in child care this summer? These individuals have a regular schedule and attend the child care facility daily. A rotating series of workers would not participate in the program. Some child care facilities have 1-2 workers and it is the same persons each day at the facility.

A: Yes, IF the individuals meet the age requirements in DELACARE Regulations, IF the individuals are the same each day working in the same class each day, and IF the daily health screenings are performed before the youth workers are admitted to the building. It is not permitted if the youth worker program wants to supply a series of different youth workers to the program. Consistency is required.

12. Q: The requirements say no outside contractors. I need an electrical inspection. If I take all the kids outside, will that be ok?

A: The child care area would have to be properly cleaned and disinfected before the children are permitted to return inside the child care facility. If the electrical inspection cannot be conducted outside of child care hours, then OCCL will grant an extension for you to get the inspection later.

13. Q: Staffing is still a big concern, as we were already dealing with a staffing shortage and now we have staff calling out with possible COVID symptoms and not wanting to return to work for fear of getting sick. Is there guidance for how to recruit and maintain staff in this context to make sure we're able to maintain the required group sizes and ratios, have consistent groups, and not combine groups at the beginning and end of the day?

A: Unfortunately, staffing concerns were an issue prior to Covid-19. While this topic has been a source of conversation and concern among several government agencies and higher education, OCCL has no solution to offer at this time.

14. Q: Should we suspend tours to the facility at this time?

A: At this time, outside persons are not permitted inside child care facilities that are currently operating. Unless you can conduct virtual tours, they are not permitted right now. However, programs that operate on an academic year and are closed for the summer may conduct tours of their facility because there are no children in care.

15. Q: Public playgrounds are starting to open up at the town's discretion. Are centers allowed to utilize their playgrounds if it is not accessible to the public?

A: The meaning of this question is a little unclear. If a public playground is not currently accessible to the public, then a child care facility may not use it. If the question is asking if a child care facility may use their own facility's playground, then the answer is yes, with a few restrictions. Groups should not be mixed while on the playground and social distancing should be observed as much as practical. Contact surfaces should be disinfected between uses by different groups as much as feasible.

16. Q: What would be the safest way for infants to be handed off to the provider without use of a car seat, considering safe distancing?

A: Parents and providers should both be masked. Public health guidance advises that the parent could place the infant in a stroller and the staff member would take the infant to the classroom. The stroller must be disinfected before another child is placed in it. Or, when the child has a car seat or carrier that is specific to them, the carrier could be placed on the floor or other safe surface, the handle could be wiped, and then the carrier can be used to transport the child. The provider should sanitize their hands before and after removing the child from the carrier. A last alternative would be that the masked parent simply hands the infant safely to the masked provider; no social distancing is maintained for this brief period of time.

17. Q: We are having any person that is entering the building remove their shoes and place on "indoor shoes" that have been cleaned/disinfected or wear a pair of booties to cover their shoes. Is there any advantage to doing this or do you feel this is an unnecessary step?

A: According to guidance provided by Public Health, they would not discourage facilities from taking this step, but they are not aware of this being a standard recommendation from CDC. The risk from transfer that this prevents is likely minimal.

18. Q: What happens if an employee has been exposed to someone that tested positive for COVID-19?

A: According to guidance provided by Public Health, if the employee would be considered a close contact (less than 6' away for more than 10 minutes) then they should follow advice from DPH or their medical provider. The standard requirement is to self-isolate for 14 days, but there are allowances for critical workers.

19. Q: If a program received an extension to their regular license expiration date (due to the Covid-19 restrictions) and the staff take PD training during the extension period, will the PD be counted as hours toward their "typical" license year that ends in 2021, or will it be wrapped into the PD hours that they were required to take for the license year that just ended and was extended?

A: This year because of the license extensions, a family child care provider or center owner or administrator may choose in which licensing year the training taken during the extension will "count." This decision will apply to all staff in a center; individual staff members may not count the training toward different licensing years. Simply inform your licensing specialist in which year your training taken during the extension should apply.