



March 4, 2020

A message from the Snohomish Health District Child Care Health Outreach Program to Child Care Owners and Directors

Dear Child Care and Early Learning Providers,

There is growing concern about the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and how child cares, preschools, and early learning programs are preparing. There have been confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Snohomish County. The potential public health threat posed by COVID-19 is high, both globally and to the United States. However, individual risk is dependent on exposure. Please refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions](#) document posted on the Snohomish Health District website. This document is updated when guidance changes.

To reduce the spread of illness in child care settings, the guidance remains to exclude ill children and staff and to maintain a sanitary early learning space.

Follow exclusion guidelines

Sick children and staff members need to stay home. It is important to conduct a daily health check when each child arrives to look for signs of illness and check in with each child's parent about the child's well-being. Make sure to check for signs of respiratory illness which may include runny nose, headache cough, sore throat and/or fever. While this virus was first identified in China, it is not linked to any ethnic or racial group. Currently no specific individual or groups of people should be excluded from child care unless they have been explicitly directed to self-quarantine by a health official.

Maintain current sanitation practices

Please follow the existing protocol outlined in your health policy to minimize the spread of illnesses. The best steps you can take are the same ones that help prevent other respiratory illnesses like the flu. This includes all providers, staff and children:

- Wash hands often and after specific activities with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (follow specific [handwashing guidelines](#) as outlined on our website at <http://www.snohd.org/298/Handwashing>).
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth and wash hands after helping children blow their nose.
- Stay at home and away from others when sick. Post the new "[Illness Prevention Poster for Schools and Child Cares](#)" and the "[Keep Me Home If Poster](#)" for parents to see and remind them children cannot come to child care when sick.
- Be diligent about cleaning, sanitizing and disinfecting. Follow current procedures as outlined by the [Washington State Department of Health](#) for bleach or the product label for other products. If you use a product other than bleach, make sure it is EPA registered and for influenza or human coronavirus. Conduct daily (or more frequent) cleaning and sanitizing of objects and surfaces, especially "high-touch" ones like doorknobs, counters, light switches, or remotes. Make sure you complete the three-step process.
- Instruct children how to cover their mouths and nose with a tissue when coughing or sneezing, then throwing the tissue in the trash and washing your hands. Model the same procedures. Download the "[Cover Your Cough Poster](#)" for children and parents to see.
- Link to our [Gerbuster Toolkit](#) for materials to help maintain sanitary practices and follow exclusion guidelines
- Health officials are not recommending the use of face masks for the general public.

Decisions on canceling program-related events or closing programs for a period of time would be made by the Snohomish Health District Health Officer in communication with Department of Children, Youth, and Families. The scientific basis for child care and early learning closures in outbreak or pandemic settings is situation-dependent. Work with parents to make sure you have current contact and emergency contact information.

Some resources that child care facilities may find particularly helpful include:

- Interim Planning Guidance for Child Care and K-12 Schools - To help you make contingency plans for your child care program, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has [interim guidance for administrators](#) posted to their website.
- Monitor the Snohomish Health District's [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#) social media accounts for updates.



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- Please also make sure your child care receives our newsletters and health alerts. You can sign up on [our website](#).

As always, our child care health consultants are available to answer questions and provide guidance. Contact the Child Care Health Outreach Program, (425) 252-5415, childcarehealth@snohd.org.

Sincerely,

Snohomish Health District, Child Care Health Outreach Program