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Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

March 23, 2020

( ) Action Required  
(X) Informational

BULLETIN NO. 025-20 EXECUTIVE SERVICES

TO: Educational Service District Superintendents  
School District Superintendents  
School District Business Managers  
School Principals

FROM: Chris Reykdal, Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Guidance for Long-term School Closures as of March 23, 2020 (#2)

CONTACT: Kathe Taylor, Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Teaching  
360-725-6417, [kathe.taylor@k12.wa.us](mailto:kathe.taylor@k12.wa.us)

## PURPOSE AND BACKGROUND

To slow the spread of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in Washington state, Governor Jay Inslee announced on March 13 that all public and private K–12 school facilities will be closed and prohibited from providing traditional in-person instructional activities through April 24.

During long-term school closures, child care will be critically important to support frontline healthcare workers and first responders who are focused on slowing the spread of COVID-19 in our communities. Governor Inslee has communicated an expectation that school districts will make accommodations to provide child care for our healthcare and first responder families.

This bulletin addresses guidance and resources related to school districts providing child care.

## COMMUNICATING WITH FAMILIES

Families are encouraged to keep their children home, but there are many who will be called upon to provide essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools may not be able to accommodate care for all who need it. Schools also may not be able to provide care during the hours that some essential workers will need it.

Schools should direct families needing child care to the [Child Care Aware of Washington Family Center website](#) or to call 1-800-446-1114. Child Care Aware is tracking available child care across the state. Given the evolving landscape of COVID-19, contacting Child Care Aware is the

quickest way for families to get referred to care that is open and available, including extended-hour and weekend care options.

Parents or families needing guidance regarding their children and COVID-19 can be directed to:

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Child Care Checklist](#)
- [Department of Health Guidance for Parents and Caregivers](#)

## NETWORKING CHILD CARE OPTIONS

OSPI is working in partnership with other state agencies and organizations representing first responders and healthcare workers to utilize [Child Care Aware of Washington](#) as a resource for linking prioritized families to available care. As the availability of child care in communities shrinks, and as the COVID-19 pandemic persists, it will be increasingly important for schools to be networked with other child care providers and first responders seeking care.

OSPI requests that districts participate in this important effort by reporting their hours of operation, capacity and vacancies to Child Care Aware of Washington at 1-800-446-1114 (press option 2). Child Care Aware staff will build a profile of information that will be made available to their Parent Referral Staff. Please leave a message if necessary and allow up to 48 hours for a call back.

## PRIORITIZING CARE

To support our state's critical infrastructure, school districts should make accommodations to prioritize child care for the children of healthcare workers, first responders, pharmacy workers, and grocery store workers.

Districts should use the following definitions of "healthcare workers" and "first responders" as a helpful starting point:

- Members of the healthcare workforce, as defined by the Washington State Medical Association, includes people who work in any setting where healthcare services, long-term care, long-term services and supports, or personal care are delivered. This includes, but is not limited to, hospitals, clinics, behavioral health centers, nursing homes, assisted living facilities, adult family homes, and personal homes.
  - First responders, as defined in RCW 70.54.430, includes firefighters, law enforcement officers, and emergency medical personnel, as licensed or certificated by the state.
- Please note, the definitions above could be revised in future guidance.

Beyond serving these three groups, districts maintain the discretion to serve other students and families, so long as they have capacity and they adhere to social distancing guidelines to the best of their ability. [The Department of Health has provided guidance on maintaining the health and safety of children and their child care providers.](#)

Please note, the definitions above could be revised in future guidance.

## WAYS TO PROVIDE CARE

Schools may choose to offer child care independently or in collaboration with community-based organizations, such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of America and YMCA. If schools operate preschool programs or have existing partnerships with Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), Head Start, or other community-based preschool programs, they should determine the extent to which these programs may be able to serve prioritized children and families. If schools intend to offer infant and toddler care, they should partner with an experienced community-based organization or staff with individuals who have expertise in infant and toddler care to manage these efforts.

Schools are not required to be licensed in order to offer K–5 child care during the COVID-19 crisis, unless they serve infants and toddlers. If a school partners with a community-based program that is already licensed, that program can continue to operate under its existing license. Licensed programs may need to adjust their existing license in order to increase their capacity and accommodate more children, change the location of their program site, or make other changes to better serve prioritized families. The Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF) has put an emergency licensing waiver process in place to assist with needed changes. Please [contact DCYF](#) for information.

Community-based organizations not currently licensed by DCYF may be eligible to operate as an educational/recreational camp during the COVID-19 emergency. For more information about the educational/recreational camp option, please email DCYF at [emergencychildcare@dcyf.wa.gov](mailto:emergencychildcare@dcyf.wa.gov) or call 509-544-5712.

Schools unable to provide child care should be working with community-based organizations to ensure the availability of care for prioritized families. To learn more about potential community partnerships for child care in school facilities, contact local Boys and Girls Clubs and/or YMCAs.

Schools should consider how nurses, custodians, food services staff, and other district employees can support joint child care efforts. Resources and materials provided by schools to partners offering prioritized care will not be considered a gift of public funds.

Child care should continue to be provided throughout the entire school closure period, including during previously scheduled spring breaks or release days. Schools are not expected to provide child care on evenings or weekends. Families needing care outside of the school's care schedule should contact the Child Care Aware of Washington Family Center at 1-800-446-1114. Families should be encouraged to find care that can accommodate the full duration of care needed each day, in order to minimize the number of exposures.

## GUIDELINES FOR SAFELY PROVIDING CARE

Schools must adhere to the [guidelines for maintaining health and safety in child care environments](#) provided by the Washington Department of Health (DOH). DOH provides guidance for health screening, social distancing, and other health and safety practices, as well steps to take if children, staff, or parents/guardians contract COVID-19 or develop symptoms. Persons who are older, pregnant, have underlying health conditions, or have compromised immune systems are at higher risk of developing complications from this virus. These individuals should not provide child care or visit child care facilities.

DOH's child care guidance mandates a health screening at entry each day, which includes taking the temperature and checking symptoms of staff and children. Schools may wish to alternate drop-off and pick-up times for each small group to avoid a large number of people congregating outside the facility. Parents should use their own pen when signing in. If check-in is electronic, schools should provide alcohol wipes and frequently clean the screens or keyboards.

Group sizes may be no larger than 10 people total, including children and adults (e.g., one adult and nine children, two adults and eight children, etc.). Keep groups together throughout the day and do not combine groups (e.g., at opening and closing). Maintain the same groups from day to day, as much as possible. This will help reduce potential exposures and may prevent an entire program from shutting down if exposure does occur.

Large rooms, like gymnasiums with a full-sized basketball court, can be divided into two rooms. When dividing a room, create a clear barrier with cones, chairs, tables, or other items to ensure a minimum of six feet between the two groups. Use carpet squares to define sitting spaces on the floor. Cafeteria trays, place mats, or baking sheets can define table space. Remove excess chairs around the tables to accommodate smaller numbers of children. Consider making individual packets of materials for each child. Use dish tubs or small plastic shoeboxes for independent play. [There are ideas available](#) for individual play bins for younger children.

Offer outdoor play in staggered shifts. If multiple groups are outside at the same time, they should have a minimum of six feet of open space between outdoor play areas or visit these areas in shifts so they are not congregating. If the weather is nice, take more activities outside. [There are resources available](#) that provide more ideas for outdoor play and following social distancing rules. Always wash hands immediately after outdoor playtime.

It is important to remember to follow the [cleaning and disinfecting procedures set forth by DOH](#) as you rotate throughout the day.

Practice frequent handwashing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and require handwashing upon arrival, after using facial tissue, before meals or snacks, after outside time, after going to the bathroom, and prior to leaving for home. Help young children to ensure they are doing it effectively. While handwashing, encourage children to sing the alphabet song

twice, make lots of bubbles, and watch them all go down the drain. [The Department of Health has a handwashing resource](#) that may be helpful.

Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Consider creating a health station in the classroom area with tissue, hand sanitizer, and other necessary supplies by the sink. Consider posting [proper handwashing visuals](#) and other prompts that instruct children to use the supplies regularly. These posters are available in 13 languages.

## FUNDING TO SUPPORT THE PROVISION OF CARE

School districts will continue to receive funding during the COVID-19 school closure for students who are claimed through the P-223 or for basic or special education funding. To the extent districts have basic education apportionment funds available, funds may be used to pay for custodial services, food services, supplies, and contracted child care services from community partners.

### Federal Funding

The following Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) federal funds may be used to provide support services and learning activities for K–12 students, and in some program services, for preschool age children:

- Districts that receive Title I, Part A funds may utilize these funds to provide support services for preschool through high school students. Title I, Part A experiences could include small group learning opportunities that address academic content and/or social emotional learning.
- For migratory students eligible for services under Title I, Part C (Migrant Education), students/children may receive the same support as provided under Title I, Part A and in addition be provided health and social services.
- Title IV, Part A funds may provide out-of-school time learning experiences for students in grades K–12. These opportunities must focus on academic enrichment (e.g., STEM, SEL, physical education, the Arts).
- Title V, Part B, Rural Education Initiative funds may provide activities allowed under Title I, Part A.

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For general questions about this bulletin, please contact Kathe Taylor, Assistant Superintendent of Learning and Teaching, at 360-725-6417 or [kathe.taylor@k12.wa.us](mailto:kathe.taylor@k12.wa.us).

For questions about early learning programming, please contact Karma Hugo, Director of Early Learning, at 360-725-6153 or [karma.hugo@k12.wa.us](mailto:karma.hugo@k12.wa.us).

The OSPI TTY number is 360-664-3631. Previous guidance and additional information related to COVID-19 and school closures is available on the [COVID-19 page of the OSPI website](#). This bulletin is also available on the [Bulletins page of the OSPI website](#).

Michaela W. Miller, Ed.D., NBCT  
Deputy Superintendent

Jamila B. Thomas  
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CR:jp

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