



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

MICHAEL F. RICE, Ph.D.
STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 19, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Michael F. Rice, Ph.D., State Superintendent 

SUBJECT: Guidance and Considerations for Child Care within Classrooms for Children Ages 6 weeks through 5 years During the COVID-19 State of Emergency

Governor Gretchen Whitmer has reached out to Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), local education agencies, and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to assist Michigan's essential workforce (e.g., medical staff, emergency responders, and child care workers) in finding child care during this state of emergency. ISDs will be working with their partners, including local education agencies, public and private child care providers, Head Start/Early Head Start and other public preschool programs, and others to achieve this goal.

Executive Order No. 2020-16 allows for expanding child care access to children in licensed settings service children ages 0-12. This guidance document, prepared by members of the department's early childhood team, is meant to assist the education fields academic and non-academic personnel and its child care partners with the various considerations of meeting the needs of a mixed-age group of young children, ages 6 weeks through 5 years, from a child-centered philosophy during this state of emergency. It has been posted to www.michigan.gov/greatstart and is also attached. The guidance on the OGS website will be updated as necessary as the situation evolves.

For questions regarding this memo, please contact the Office of Great Start at 517-241-7004 and an early childhood education consultant will assist you.

Attachment

cc: Michigan Education Alliance

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Guidance and Considerations for COVID-19 Child Care within Classrooms for Children Ages 6 weeks through 5 years

Governor Gretchen Whitmer has reached out to Intermediate School Districts (ISDs), local education agencies (LEAs), and the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) to assist Michigan's essential workforce (e.g., medical staff, emergency responders, and child care workers) in finding child care during this state of emergency. ISDs will be working with their partners, including LEAs, public and private child care providers, Head Start/Early Head Start and other public preschool programs, and others to achieve this goal.

This guidance document, prepared by members of the department's early childhood team, is meant to assist the education fields academic and non-academic personnel and its child care partners, both school and non-school personnel with the various considerations of meeting the needs of a mixed-age group of young children from a child-centered philosophy during this state of emergency. It is solely for the youngest children (six weeks to five years) who may be cared for in the classrooms.

It is also vital to partner with parents to learn about the needs of specific children, to the extent possible, particularly if children in care have special needs. Parents will be the best source of information about meeting those needs and supporting their children in these new child care environments.

Age Group Terminology

Infants: birth – 12 months

Toddlers: 12 – 30 months

Preschoolers: 2.5 years – 5 years

General Considerations Regardless of Age:

- Follow all Centers for Disease Control general safety guidelines for environmental cleaning and disinfecting.
- Follow LARA Licensing Rules/Guidance for Child Care Centers. See https://www.michigan.gov/documents/lara/Centers_final_rule_R_400.8101_to_400.8840_12-17-19_674860_7.pdf.
- Because this is a new setting for the children with new caregivers, children will need extra support. Therefore, consider keeping adult-to-child ratios low: 1:3 infants and toddlers, 2:10 preschoolers.
- Anticipate that children will need additional social-emotional supports and coping strategies during drop-off and throughout the day, given that they are in an unfamiliar setting with new peers and new adults.
- Whenever possible, assign infants, toddlers, and preschoolers to separate classrooms. If infants and toddlers are combined, keep group size at 10 or fewer.
- When assigning age groups to classrooms, consider refrigeration/food warming needs as well as toileting needs of children:
 - in-room access to refrigeration for storage of, and warming vessels for, infants' formula and breast milk;
 - in-room access to refrigeration if parents are providing toddler food; and
 - in-room access to child-sized toilets for toddlers.
- Pay special attention to food allergies and individual child needs.

- All children must regularly wash their hands including infants.
- Protocol for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting toys, furniture, dishes and other surfaces must be followed, see: https://www.naeyc.org/sites/default/files/globally-shared/downloads/PDFs/accreditation/early-learning/clean_table.pdf.
- All classrooms must be on ground floor level for safe evacuation during an emergency.
- All electrical outlets at child level must be covered. Be mindful of electrical cord placement and children's access to them.

Infant Age Group Specific

- Consider using gym mats to cover a section of the floor for floor- and tummy-time play. Sanitize first.
- Consider utilizing portable cribs for infant napping and diaper changing. Parents may be able to provide one for their child's use only. Each child should have a portable or full-size crib assigned for individual use. Each should be sanitized before use.
- INFANTS MUST ALWAYS BE PLACED TO SLEEP ON THEIR BACK WITH NO OTHER ITEMS (including blankets) IN THE CRIB.
- INFANTS MAY ONLY SLEEP IN THE ASSIGNED CRIB, not in car seats, on the floor, etc. See <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/pdf/2018-01-vitalsigns.pdf>.
- Parents may be asked to provide: diapers and wipes, pacifiers if used, formula and baby food, changes of clothing. Each item must be labeled and used only for that child. However, the child care program must have these items readily available regardless in case of shortage or need.
- Infants must be fed and allowed to sleep on demand. Diapers must be checked hourly and changed if wet or soiled. For diaper-changing procedures, see: <https://www.cdc.gov/healthywater/pdf/hygiene/Diapering-procedures-child-care-508c.pdf>.
- Infants must be held while they are being fed; do not prop bottles.
- All choking hazards must be removed from the classroom, see: <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/education-store/choking-hazard-safety>.
- Furniture with sharp edges should be removed from the classroom.
- Consider purchasing or obtaining (sanitize if used):
 - toys for chewing, shaking, making (quiet) noises, feeling textures, nesting/stacking
 - bibs
 - spoons, bowls, sippy cups (for older infants)
 - shoe covers for all adults entering the classroom (to keep floors clean for crawling children)
 - gloves for diaper changing
 - extra spray bottles for more sanitizing
 - dish tubs for the 3-step sanitizing process, see: <https://childcare.extension.org/cleaning-sanitizing-and-disinfecting-in-child-care/>.
- All dishes, sippy cups, and utensils must be sanitized with the 3-step sanitizing process (see above link) following each use.

- As children play with toys, any toy that has been put in a child’s mouth must be picked up as soon as the child is done with it and sanitized with the 3-step sanitizing process (see above link) before being used again.
- Talk with infants while feeding, playing, diaper changing. This is an early literacy learning opportunity!
- Adults should spend time on the floor interacting with individuals or small groups of children, talking about what they are doing, looking at and talking about pictures in books, singing songs, and doing finger plays. See: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SuperSimpleSongs>. Again, this is an early literacy learning opportunity!
- Infants enjoy the outdoors. You can take blankets out for immobile infants to lay on. Or take them for a walk. They would enjoy looking at grass, pine needles, birds, bubbles, etc.

Toddler Age Group Specific

- Institute daily routines with toddlers with consideration of individual needs for eating, toileting, sleep.
- Toddlers can sleep on cots. Nap time is promoted with quiet music and low lighting. Adults can sit by cots to calm and relax children. Toddlers need more sleep than preschoolers. Nap time should be extended and some may need two naps. Toddlers should be allowed to have a comfort item when napping (a blanket or stuffed animal).
- Parents may be asked to provide: diapers and wipes, toddler food, changes of clothing. Each item must be labeled and used only for that child. However, the child care program must have these items readily available regardless in case of shortage or need. Special care must be taken with foods served to toddlers to prevent choking.
- All choking hazards must be removed from the classroom, see: <https://www.nationwidechildrens.org/family-resources-education/health-wellness-and-safety-resources/education-store/choking-hazard-safety>.
- Consider purchasing or obtaining (sanitize if used):
 - toys for chewing, shaking, making (quiet) noises, feeling textures, nesting/stacking, dumping/filling
 - bibs
 - spoons, bowls, sippy cups
 - gloves for diaper changing and support of toilet training
 - potty chairs if toddler-sized toilets are not available
 - extra spray bottles for more sanitizing
 - dish tubs for the 3-step sanitizing process, see: <https://child.care.extension.org/cleaning-sanitizing-and-disinfecting-in-child-care/>.
- All dishes, sippy cups, and utensils must be sanitized with the 3-step sanitizing process (see above link) following each use.
- As children play with toys, any toy that has been put in a child’s mouth must be picked up as soon as the child is done with it and sanitized with the 3-step sanitizing process (see above link) before being used again.
- Potty chairs must be cleaned and sanitized after each use.

- Adults should spend time on the floor interacting with individuals or small groups of children, talking about what they are doing, reading very short books, singing songs, and doing finger plays. See: <https://www.youtube.com/user/SuperSimpleSongs>. This is an early literacy learning opportunity!
- Toddlers love to be outdoors. Playgrounds are likely not equipped for toddlers; but, an open area with grass, balls, scarves, parachute, pails and shovels, chalk, bubbles, etc. will keep them entertained.

Preschool Age Group Specific

- Establish an extended daily routine (e.g., standard times for starting meals/snacks, play times, naps, outdoor time, group read alouds) for the children to provide structure throughout the day, given that they have been uprooted from their familiar setting and peers, and this helps to provide some sense of security and reduce anxiety and stress.
- Naptime or quiet time must be provided for 3- and 4-year-old children in attendance 5 or more continuous hours per day. For children who do not sleep at rest time, quiet activities must be provided such as reading books or putting puzzles together. Preschoolers should be allowed to have a comfort item when napping (a blanket or stuffed animal).
- Parents may be asked to provide a change of clothes in case of spills or toileting accidents. However, the child care program must have these items readily available regardless in case of shortage or need.
- Ensure preschool children have access to materials and equipment for play and learning including:
 - blocks
 - puzzles
 - books
 - pretend/dramatic play
 - games (e.g. memory match, bingo, Candy Land®)
 - creative arts materials
- Adults should spend time engaged with individual and small groups of children, talking about what they are doing, as partners in play, reading together, singing songs, facilitating games and movement activities. This is an early literacy learning opportunity!

For additional guidance on child growth, development, and early learning see Michigan's State Board of Education approved Early Childhood Standards of Quality:

For Infants and Toddler Programs:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSQ_IT_approved_422341_7.pdf

For Prekindergarten:

https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/ECSQ_OK_Approved_422339_7.pdf