

COVID-19 and Childcares — Questions and Answers

Why is it recommended to close a program for 3 days if there is a confirmed positive case? Does that mean a program only has to close for 3 days?

The North Dakota Department of Health (NDDoH) may recommend that a childcare or classroom close for three days. The reason for this is to allow public health to conduct a COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing. Public health will interview each case to identify close contacts. The case will be advised to isolate and contacts to quarantine. If during the course of the investigation it is determined that there are a number of close contacts in a specific classroom or in the facility, every child in the classroom or the facility will need to be quarantined (stay home) for 14 days from last exposure to the case. That is why certain classrooms or entire childcares may need to close for a longer period of time.

Why do some childcares have to close an entire childcare and some only have to close a classroom?

Closure of classrooms or facilities depend on the number of cases and contacts in the facility. If the case(s) and contacts are limited to one classroom, then only that classroom needs to close. If a case(s) is in multiple rooms and exposed children and staff in multiple rooms, then more than one classroom or the entire facility may be considered a close contact and therefore need to be quarantined and the facility closed.

Why is floating to other classrooms by staff not recommended?

Having staff “float” to multiple classrooms is not recommended, when feasible, because if that staff person is infected with COVID-19, then children and other staff in multiple classrooms will be considered close contacts. Multiple rooms may have to be closed due to staff and children needing to be quarantined.

What will happen if a case of COVID-19 occurs in the childcare?

If a confirmed case(s) of COVID-19 occurs in the childcare, report the case to the NDDoH at 1.866.207.2880 Monday – Saturday 8a.m. – 5p.m. The NDDoH may receive notification of the case prior to the childcare. In that case, the NDDoH will notify the childcare. The case will be interviewed to determine onset, symptoms, and who are close contacts. The case will need to be excluded from the childcare for at least 10 days from symptom onset (or test collection date if no symptoms) AND 24 hours fever free without the use of fever reducing medications AND symptom improvement. Close contacts will be quarantined for 14 days from their last exposure to a case. If the case and close contact were both wearing a mask at all times during the exposure, this would exempt the contact from being quarantined. In this situation, individuals should self-monitor symptoms for 14 days and should continue to wear a mask.

What will happen if a case of COVID-19 occurs in a parent?

If a parent of a childcare is being tested and has symptoms, then the parent and child should be excluded from the childcare pending test results. If a parent is asymptomatic and a close contact to a case, then the parent should be

excluded from the childcare for 14-days even with a negative test result, unless both the close contact and the infected person were wearing masks at all times during the exposure, the child is allowed to attend during this time. If a parent is asymptomatic and not a close contact, or the parent was exempted from quarantine due to mask use and is tested, then the parent does not need to be excluded pending test results. If a parent tests positive, the child will be considered a close contact and must be excluded from the childcare for 14 days from last exposure to the parent. The child's quarantine period is during the caregiver's 10-day isolation period plus the child's 14-day quarantine.

What will happen if a close contact to someone with COVID-19 is in the childcare?

Close contacts to cases of COVID-19 need to be quarantined for 14 days from the last time being exposed to the case. A close contact is defined as someone who is within six feet for a total of 15 minutes or more. A close contact may also be someone directly exposed to a case's secretions (coughing, sneezing, etc.). If the infected person and close contact were both wearing a mask at all times during the exposure, this would exempt the contact from being quarantined. In this situation, individuals should monitor symptoms for 14 days and should continue to wear a mask.

What will happen if a close contact to someone with COVID-19 is a parent?

If a parent of a child in the childcare is close contact to someone with COVID-19, then the parent should not be allowed in the childcare for 14 days from the last time exposed to the case, unless the parent and the infected person were both wearing a mask at all times during the exposure. The child may still attend the childcare as long as the parent does not develop symptoms and/or test positive.

What is the definition of a close contact?

A close contact is defined as someone who is within six feet for a total of 15 minutes or more. A close contact may also be someone directly exposed to a case's secretions (coughing, sneezing, etc.).

Do siblings of a close contact need to stay home and quarantine?

Siblings of a close contact do not need to stay home or quarantine. If the close contact tests positive, then the siblings will need to be quarantined.

Does someone who has a history of testing positive for COVID-19 have to quarantine if identified as a close contact to someone with COVID-19?

At this time, it is not known if someone can be re-infected with COVID-19. People who have tested positive for COVID-19 do not need to quarantine or get tested again for up to 3 months if they do not develop symptoms again. People who develop symptoms again within 3 months may need to be tested again if there is no other cause identified for their symptoms.

Why are household contacts excluded from childcare longer than other close contacts?

Household contacts to COVID-19 cases should be excluded longer because they are continuously exposed to the case in the household. Close contacts need to be excluded for 14 days after their last exposure to a case while the case was infectious, unless the close contact and the infected person were wearing masks at all times during the exposure. A case is infectious for at least 10 days after onset of symptoms (or 10 days after collection date of test if asymptomatic). That means a household contact must be excluded through the case's isolation period plus the contact's 14-day quarantine period.

What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?

Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed to COVID-19 to see if they become sick. The quarantine period for COVID-19 is 14 days from the last time exposed to the case. Isolation separates sick people with COVID-19 from people who are not sick. The isolation period for COVID-19 is 10 days from symptom onset (or test collection date if no symptoms) AND 24 hours fever free without the use of fever reducing medications AND symptom improvement.

What is the protocol if a staff member is being tested? Does the staff member need to be out of childcare until results are known or can the staff member continue working?

If an employee of a childcare is being tested and has symptoms, then the employee should be excluded from the childcare pending test results. If an employee is asymptomatic and a close contact to a case, then the employee should be excluded from the childcare for 14-days even with a negative test result, unless both the close contact and the infected person were wearing masks at all times during the exposure. If the employee is positive, the employee should be excluded through the 10-day isolation period. If an employee is asymptomatic and not a close contact, or the employee was exempted from quarantine due to mask use and is tested, then the employee does not need to be excluded pending test results.

Does the health department provide documentation that staff can give to their employer that proves that they are a close contact?

Public health authorities can provide a letter that an employee could provide to the employer about being a close contact. Additionally, the employee will receive a survey from public health about their symptoms each day. The survey could also be used as proof of being a close contact.

What if children have allergies? Since they always have runny nose and cough, they would not pass the screening questions. Do I need to exclude them?

The symptoms discussed in the screening questions refer to new onset of symptoms. If a child always has a cough, then they would not need to be excluded unless it has gotten worse. Since children have such mild symptoms, they should be referred to their healthcare provider for evaluation.

What if a childcare program has half walls instead of floor to ceiling walls?

A close contact is defined as being within six feet for 15 minutes (cumulative) or more. If the childcare has half walls, it may be a good idea to put up a curtain or partition. If that is not possible, then children should be kept as far as possible from the wall to avoid being a close contact if there is a case in the other room.

Can programs continue to provide water play in sensory tables?

COVID-19 is not transmitted through water; therefore, children can continue to participate in water play if children remain in their cohorts.

Can programs continue toothbrushing?

Brushing teeth is an important component to the overall health of the child. Toothbrushing can continue to occur if precautions are taken, such as washing hands before and after and using separate toothpaste.