

## Recommendations for Open Child Care Programs

Child care programs should operate in accordance with the [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) released by the Centers of Disease Control. In addition, the City of Austin and Austin Public Health (APH) have the following recommendations of best practices for child care programs to consider implementing. These recommendations are not intended to be comprehensive guidance. Rather, these recommendations are designed to supplement the [Minimum Standards Health Protocols Check List for Child Care Centers](#) released by Governor Abbott on May 18, 2020. Following these supplemental recommendations to the greatest extent possible will further minimize the risk of coronavirus transmission and help keep staff, children, and families safe.

APH also strongly encourages child care programs to consult this [COVID-19 Risk-Based Guidelines chart](#) which provides recommendations related to face coverings, gathering sizes, non-essential travel, and other ways to stay safe during the pandemic based on the stages of risk. The latest local information on COVID-19, including local control orders, can be found at this City of Austin web site: [www.austintexas.gov/covid19](http://www.austintexas.gov/covid19).

### Face Coverings

- It is strongly recommended that the following people wear fabric face coverings :
  - All child care staff
  - Parents and guardians dropping off and picking up children
  - Children over the age of 6
- Face coverings should not be worn by:
  - Children under age 2
  - People who cannot take off the coverings without assistance
- Teachers should use their best judgement to determine if children should remove face coverings in these situations:
  - When face coverings inhibit children from breathing freely while engaging in outdoor physical activity
  - During extreme heat when a face covering could contribute to a greater risk of heat-related illness

### Screening for Fever

- The City of Austin has changed the screening temperature for child care to align with the new temperature released by the state on May 18, 2020.
- Deny entry to any adult or child with a measured temperature greater than or equal to 100.0 degrees Fahrenheit.

### Testing

- It is strongly recommended that staff exhibiting new or worsening symptoms of possible COVID-19 seek a COVID-19 test. Enrollment for free public testing can be found at [www.austintexas.gov/covid19](http://www.austintexas.gov/covid19).

### Group Sizes, Gatherings & Events

- It is strongly recommended that camps not exceed the ratio and group size limits specified in the [Minimum Standards Health Protocols Check List for Child Care Centers](#).

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- Child care programs are strongly encouraged to further reduce group sizes beyond those protocols. Keeping group sizes as small as possible reduces the risk of coronavirus exposure and spread. Reference the [COVID-19 Risk-Based Guidelines chart](#).
- It is strongly recommended that child care programs:
  - Not hold group gatherings, events, or assemblies
  - Not invite outside visitors or guests whose presence or service is not essential

### Field trips

- It is strongly recommended that child care programs:
  - Not take field trips to locations where children will come in contact with large groups of people or many people crowded together
  - Consider planning walking field trips rather than trips requiring transport in vehicles
- Walking trips to nearby outdoor natural spaces are a safer option than field trips to indoor locations

### Transportation

- If transport is provided, in addition to the state Minimum Standards Health Protocols, it is strongly recommended that staff:
  - Screen all passengers before they enter the vehicle
  - Follow the same screening protocols used for people entering the child care program
  - Follow guidance from the American Camp Association that could also pertain to child care regarding [Transportation To or From](#) programs and [Travel by Bus or Van](#).

### How to contact Austin Public Health, the local health department

- Call the Austin Public Health Nurse Line at 512-972-5560 to:
  - Ask questions about suspected or potential cases in child care programs
  - Ask questions about COVID-19 exposure of staff, children, or families
  - Report any laboratory confirmed cases of COVID-19 among children or staff
- The Nurse Line staff will advise child care programs on next steps regarding suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19.