Frequently Asked Questions for Child Care Programs

Updated 3/23/2020

Q. Are child care programs being ordered to close?

A. Child care programs are NOT being ordered to close. In fact, quite the opposite is true. Governor Cuomo and his administration consider child care to be an essential function critical to enabling parents to go to work.

Q. Who can order an child care program to close due to COVID-19?

A. In certain circumstances, local authorities, mainly local Departments of Health, have the authority to direct programs to close under quarantine or other emergency orders. In addition, child care programs are business entities and can voluntarily close the program.

Q. Have the requirements regarding staff/child ratios been lifted?

A. OCFS has been granted the authority to waive select regulatory requirements in order to meet the need for child care services. Staff/child ratio is one such requirement. You may contact your regulator and submit a waiver request. For the duration of this emergency, there may be flexibility regarding certain regulatory requirements.

Q. Have the regulations regarding comprehensive background clearance checks been lifted?

A. OCFS has been granted the authority to waive select regulatory requirements in order to meet the need for child care services. Comprehensive background clearance checks are one such requirement. You may contact your regulator and submit a waiver request. For the duration of this emergency, there may be flexibility regarding certain regulatory requirements.

Q. How do child care programs maintain a perimeter of 6 feet while caring for them?

A. Adults must be in close proximity to young children in order to provide proper care. It is important to take universal precautions. Ensure handwashing strategies are being followed including washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available individual wipes may be used in combination with hand sanitizer. Also, be sure to perform routine substantial cleaning of the childcare program.

Q. Are child care programs required to maintain a group size of 10 or less?

A. The Centers for Disease Control, in its guidance on events and mass gatherings recommends group size to ten or fewer and therefore we ask providers to reconfigure space to limit overall density of rooms to ten or fewer children. See https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/index.html.
Your licensed/registered capacity, however, remains in effect unless you've been approved for a waiver by OCFS as there may be ways for you to serve a greater number of children while continuing to prioritize their health and safety and that of your employees**.**

Q. Why haven't child care programs been closed?

A. Child care is considered an essential service. In a time of crisis, other essential professionals must be able to go to work and have safe and suitable child care available to their children. If you have openings in your program, please use those openings to serve the children of employees who are unable to work from home and

must continue to report to their work location. Please reach out to your local Child Care Resource and Referral agency and make them aware of any slots you have available.

Q. How do programs limit access to the program and try to reduce exposure to COVID-19?

A. Programs are encouraged to utilize these screening questions:

1.Within the last 14 days, have you traveled to a country that the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention should be avoided for nonessential travel or where travelers should practice enhanced precautions?
(China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, Japan)

2. Have you had contact with any person with known COVID-19 or person under investigation for COVID-19?

3. Do you have any symptoms of a respiratory infection (e.g., cough, sore throat, fever, shortness of breath)?

4. Are you or anyone in your home in active quarantine status?

If an individual responds “yes” to any of the above, do not allow that individual to enter the program. Where staffing allows, programs can implement strategies to reduce traffic in the program including meeting children at the door.