



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

BRAD LITTLE – GOVERNOR
DAVE JEPPESEN – DIRECTOR

Julie A. Hammon – Administrator
STATEWIDE SELF RELIANCE PROGRAMS
450 West State Street, 2ND Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, Idaho 83720-0036

PHONE 208-334-5815
FAX 208-334-5817

March 16, 2020

Dear Child Care Provider,

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (IDHW) recognizes that childcare is an important and essential service for working families in our communities. The Child Care Program is working closely with contractors and partners to ensure clear, concise communication. Collectively, we have outlined the following recommendations for maintaining care:

1. **Prevention:** Reduce your chances of exposure and protect others.
 - a. Stay home if you're sick, encourage your staff to stay home if they don't feel well.
 - b. Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue (or sleeve), and then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - c. Wash your hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol.
 - d. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
 - e. Clean and disinfect surfaces that are often touched.
 - f. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - g. Child care providers, their staff, and/or household members should follow Department of Health guidance for evaluation, testing, treatment, and reporting related to adults and children suspected of having COVID-19 available here. <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/>

2. **Communication:** A key component to preparedness is developing a communication plan. Your plan should ensure that all of your communications are culturally and linguistically sensitive and accessible for the children and families you serve.
 - a. Report if you have staff or families exposed or determined to be infected with coronavirus/COVID-19. Please call 2-1-1 (1-800-926-2588) for all reporting needs. Keep in mind that childcare facilities are *required* to report if you or anyone living in your home or working in your facility has a communicable disease that might pose a threat to the safety of a child. The Idaho Child Care Program and Idaho State Daycare Licensing are working closely with local Health Departments to ensure we are coordinating efforts.

 - b. Communicate about coronavirus/COVID-19 with your staff. Share information about what is currently known about COVID-19 and your facility's preparedness plans. Communicate your expectations for cleaning, respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick, and supporting employees who need to take care of a sick family member.

- c. Communicate about COVID-19 with children and families. Provide updates about changes to your policies or operations. Use all communication channels that you have available, including direct communications (face-to-face, letters), electronic communications (your facility's website or social media pages), as well as parent meetings/calls to share updates. Make sure to prepare for the language needs of the families you serve, which may include accessing interpreters and translating materials. Follow this link for information about Children and COVID-19:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/children-faq.html>
 - d. Post signs. Signs should be highly visible and remind staff, visitors, and students to perform hand hygiene, sneeze/cough into their elbow, put used tissues in a waste receptacle, and to wash hands immediately after using tissues. Recommend everyone to avoid close greetings like hugs or handshakes.
 - e. Misinformation about coronavirus and COVID-19 can create fear and hostility that hurts people and makes it harder to keep everyone healthy. We're stronger as a community when we stand together against discrimination. For general questions about COVID-19, visit <https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/> for the latest on the outbreak and investigation, and tips on ways to protect yourself.
3. Business Practices: It is strongly recommended that child care providers contact IDHW before making any changes to their business practices in response to COVID-19. We are here to support you and the important work that you do.
- a. Examples of changes in business practices include, but are not limited to:
 - i. Suspending services at a childcare facility, such as temporarily closing a program
 - ii. Relocating staff and children to another facility
 - iii. Reducing or eliminating the provision of community-based activities
 - iv. Increasing or decreasing the number of children you serve at a facility
 - b. Childcare providers should contact IDHW policy staff to notify them of a proposed change in business practices and/or seek guidance related to a proposed change. Idaho Child Care Program and State Licensing policy staff may be reached by calling 2-1-1 (1-800-926-2588).

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare recognizes that communities and providers are concerned about the impact the coronavirus/COVID-19 may have on their programs and programs they work with. Childcare is an essential community service, and we remain committed to ensuring Idaho's children are cared for in safe, quality environments. Thank you for your continued dedication to providing these much-needed services.

In partnership and with gratitude,



Ericka Rupp – Program Manager- Child Care
Aubrie Hunt – Program Specialist- Idaho Child Care Program
Marilyn Peoples – Program Specialist- State Daycare Licensing