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 really depends on the number of cases and contacts in the facility. If a case(s) and contacts are limited to one classroom, then only the 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 will 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 800.472.2180. 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 last exposure to a case.

When it is a staff member?
If a case occurs in a staff member, 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 last exposure to a case.

For more information about COVID-19 please visit www.health.nd.gov/coronavirus.
When it is a parent?
If a case occurs in a parent, the parent should not be allowed in the childcare for 10 days from symptom onset (or test collection date if no symptoms). The child will be considered a close contact and have to be excluded from the childcare for 14 days from last exposure to the parent while the parent is still contagious. The child’s quarantine period is during the parent’s 10-day isolation period plus the child’s 14-day quarantine.

When it is a child?
If a case occurs in a child, 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 last exposure to a case.

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 15 minutes or more. A close contact may also be someone directly exposed to a case’s secretions (coughing, sneezing, etc.).

When it is a staff member?
If an employee of a childcare is a close contact to someone with COVID-19, the employee should be excluded from the childcare for 14 days from the last time the employee was exposed to the case. If the employee is a household contact to a COVID-19 case, then the employee will have to be excluded from the childcare for the case’s 10-day isolation period plus the employee’s 14-day quarantine period.

When it is a parent?
If a parent of a child in the childcare is a 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. The child may still attend the childcare as long as the parent does not develop symptoms and/or test positive.

When it is a child?
If a child in the childcare is a close contact to someone with COVID-19, the child should be excluded from the childcare for 14 days from the last time the child was exposed to the case. If the child is a household contact to a COVID-19 case, then the child will have to be excluded from the childcare for the case’s 10-day isolation period plus the child’s 14-day quarantine period.

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

Why might a child/staff member who is living with a person with a positive case have to be excluded from childcare longer than a child who has been exposed to a positive case who is not living with the child/staff member?
Household contacts to COVID-19 cases have to be excluded longer because they are continuously exposed to the case in the household. Contacts need to be excluded for 14 days after their last exposure to a case while the case was infectious. 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 has to be excluded through the case’s isolation period plus the contact’s 14-day quarantine period.

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What is the difference between quarantine and isolation?
Quarantine separates and restricts the movement of people who were exposed 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. If the employee is negative, the employee should be excluded through the 14-day quarantine period. 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 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 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 as long as children continue to be in their same cohorts.

Can programs continue toothbrushing?
Brushing teeth is an important component to the overall health of the child. Toothbrushing can continue to occur, as long as precautions including washing hands before and after.

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