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PROMOTING QUALITY CHILD CARE

CCCMONTANA.ORG

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To our Early Childhood Community,

Child Care Connections is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit advocating for the well-being and quality care of children in Gallatin, Lewis & Clark, Park, Meagher, Broadwater, and Jefferson counties. As a community leader in child care we are a member of local emergency response teams and working to provide support to our communities during this uncertain time. There are currently no formal directives placed on child care in Montana. However, we offer the following guidance for childcares.

Guidance for childcares

Child care and early learning serve a vitally important function in allowing parents to continue working, which has essential public health, economic and social impacts. We support child care providers in making decisions about whether and for how long to operate their child care business. However, overall, we strongly urge child care providers to follow national guidelines from [Child Care Aware of America](#) and consider closure to limit the spread of COVID-19 with the exception of serving families with essential workers.

In his [public address today Governor Bullock](#) stated, “Montanans have an obligation to slow the spread of this virus [COVID-19]. Our fellow Montanans can all continue to set a good example for each other in adhering to social distancing directives – and know that it will save lives.” With this in mind, we recognize that social distancing is a key concept to stopping disease transmission and is extremely challenging for young children and those who care for them. This makes it even more critical to undertake prevention efforts like keeping sick staff and children at home and to cleaning regularly.

We recommend the following principles to guide these decisions:

- Ensure where possible that children are kept in cohorts, keeping the same children together and avoiding groups/cohorts contacting one another. Whenever possible, keep the number of children and providers in each group at 10 or less. Where possible, prioritize keeping family units in the same group (i.e. an infant, 2 yrs. old and 4 yrs. old from the same family would be in the same group). Where possible, limit the total number of children in any one facility to 24.
- Adhere to Montana Child Care Licensing ratio standards at all times and ensure active supervision of children.
- Take decisive and proactive steps to ensure that children and staff with a fever or persistent cough are sent home; keep anyone sick separate from well students and staff until the sick person can be sent home, while also ensuring that all children are supervised at all times. As

children enter the child care setting each day it is recommended that a staff person wearing gloves checks the temperature of each child and adult, and asks if the child or anyone in the home has had a fever, cough, shortness of breath, flu like symptoms or have been around anyone with COVID-19. If the family answers yes to any of these questions, it is recommended that their child not return to the facility for 14 days.

- It is recommended that families who have been traveling outside of Montana not bring their child into the child care setting for 14 days after the family last traveled.
- Develop a plan to clean and disinfect more frequently; clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces; and wash hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Wear gloves when changing diapers or wiping noses and ensure that gloves are changed after each individual use and wash hands before putting on the next pair of gloves. Always wash hands with soap and water if they are visibly dirty. Remember to supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol.
- Offer outdoor play in staggered shifts. If multiple groups are outside at the same time, they should have a minimum of six feet of open space between outdoor play areas or visit these areas in shifts so that they are not congregating. Avoid use of play structures. Always wash hands and any items used (i.e. balls) immediately after outdoor play time.
- Encourage and allow staff who are over the age of 60 or who have compromised immune systems to leave the workplace.
- When possible, prioritize care for parents or caregivers who work in essential occupations such as health care, first responders, public health, grocery store and public service workers, and other child care functions.
- Adapt drop-off and pick-up processes (such as signing in and out) to support social distancing and decrease shared surface touches and the spread of infection.
- If a community experiences wide spread COVID-19 infections, it is recommended that child care settings close to all families with non-essential occupations.
- When possible, communicate with families about ways to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and the importance of doing so to all families and staff involved in the child care provision.
- Currently, we have no additional information on Best Beginnings or provider payments during times of provider closure. We will continue to follow-up with officials and look forward to providing more information as soon as possible.
- Whenever possible children should be kept home. Families who have the capability to keep children home should do so. Additional [directive from the Governor](#) states, "Parents should, avoid, if possible, placing children for care with grandparents, family members, friends, or providers over the age of 60 or immuno-compromised persons."

Further guidance may be found at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>

We will be supporting families and providers during this pandemic.

If you are interested in assisting with child care during the current health emergency, please contact us at (406) 587-7786 or office@cccmontana.org.

Thank you for your time and attention during this critical time. Please help yourself and community stay safe and healthy by recommendations from the [CDC](https://www.cdc.gov) on washing your hands regularly, staying home if you are sick, and practicing social distancing.

Best wishes,

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P.S. For updates and resources, please check our COVID-19 page at cccmontana.org/covid-19.