



Updated January 18, 2022

DCF Order 5

## **Frequently Asked Questions Regarding COVID-19 for Congregate Care Settings**

The Department of Children and Families has received several questions related to operations of congregate care settings during the COVID-19 pandemic. We endeavor to answer as many questions as possible as quickly as possible to support you in your service of Wisconsin's children and families.

### **Can RCCs continue to operate schools?**

- Residents of RCCs can continue to attend school at the school operated by the RCC at the agency's discretion. Day students may not continue to attend a school operated by the RCC if there is an order in effect that prevents the operation of in-person schools.

### **Do congregate care facilities need to continue to meet all health and dental check/exam requirements during the pendency of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency?**

- Yes. All health and dental exam requirements must be met.

### **Will the Department waive staffing requirements regarding ratio, training, qualifications and work hours during the pandemic for congregate care facilities that need an exception due to the pandemic if the department determines that the exception will not jeopardize the health, safety or welfare of any child served?**

- All staff and employment related exceptions must be requested and submitted to DCF for approval. This includes work hour exceptions previously granted under DCF Emergency Rule EMR2009, which expired on February 12, 2021.

### **How do I make quarantine decisions?**

- The Wisconsin Department of Health Services provides guidance on [quarantine decisions](#).

### **Can I reallocate staff between programs or specialty areas?**

- Yes. All staff need to have background checks as outlined in rule.



- As described in DCF 52.02(2), DCF 57.02(2), and DCF 59.01(4), Wis. Admin Code, exceptions can be granted through the exceptions process for staff qualifications and training. Please complete and submit an exception request to your licensor.
- Please use the Child Welfare Request for Exception form, DCF-F-5023-E, which can be found on the [Child Welfare Licensed Facility Forms and Publications page](#) on the DCF website.

### Can group homes share staff?

- Group Homes that would like to share staff between agencies and programs would be required to complete the following:
  - Background Information Disclosure form: DCF 57.17(2)(d)
  - Background Check: DCF 57.17(2)(d)
  - A completed application: DCF 57.17(2)(a)
- Exceptions would need to be submitted to DCF for the following:
  - Orientation: DCF 57.16(1) Orientation. Specify when it would be completed.
  - References: DCF 57.15(2)(b)
  - Addresses and phone numbers of references: DCF 57.17(2)(c)
- The Group Home would need to add the staff to PIE within PIE reporting requirements.

### What if I need to make exceptions to rules about my physical plant?

- This is permissible through the exception process. Please complete and submit an exception request to your licensor.
- Please use the Child Welfare Request for Exception form, DCF-F-5023-E, which can be found on the [Child Welfare Licensed Facility Forms and Publications page](#) on the DCF website.

### Can my facility operate an onsite childcare for my employees?

- Information about this can be obtained from the Division of Early Care and Education (DECE).

### What do I do when a child is missing from care and returns, as it relates to exposure to COVID-19?

- Testing residents upon admission or readmission, regardless of vaccination status, could help identify those who are infected but otherwise without symptoms.
  - If the resident is not vaccinated, they should be quarantined for evidence of COVID-19 consistent with CDC and DHS guidelines.
  - CDC and DHS guidelines currently do not recommend quarantine if the resident is vaccinated and has not had prolonged close contact with someone with COVID-19 in the prior 14 days. However, consideration should be given to the



unknown circumstances and exposure a child may incur while missing from out of home care, regardless of vaccination status.

- If a resident has symptoms of COVID-19, immediately contact your [local health department and seek testing](#). Your local health department will help assess the situation and provide guidance for further actions.
- Take all steps necessary to address any immediate health care needs of the child through medical attention as appropriate.

### **Should congregate care facilities continue admissions or enrollment?**

- Yes, please continue to accept placements currently consistent with applicable requirements.
- Facilities can utilize screening procedures and should work closely with their local public health department and placing worker if there are concerns about a specific resident being exposed to COVID-19. DCF can assist in this conversation, as needed.

### **Should individuals in congregate care facilities wear face coverings or masks?**

On March 31, 2021, Emergency Order #1 requiring face coverings statewide was overturned by the Wisconsin Supreme Court. Local municipalities such as the county, town, or city in which your facility is located may have a local order concerning face coverings or masks that should still be followed. Additionally, individual facilities may implement measures more restrictive than local orders in requiring the use of face coverings or masks in the facility. The [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#) and the [CDC](#) both advise that masks continue to be worn in congregate care settings, regardless of vaccination status. DCF continues to strongly encourage the use of face coverings and masks by all individuals in a congregate care setting to reduce the exposure and transmission of Covid-19.

### **Should individuals in congregate care facilities be vaccinated?**

[DHS](#) recommends that everyone 5 and older receive a COVID-19 vaccine. DHS provides information about [where to find a vaccine](#). Parent or guardian consent must be obtained for children's vaccinations and facilities are encouraged to have conversations with parents about vaccination for all children in placement.