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 2020 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 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?

- Well visits can be delayed if it is not feasible to meet the required time frames due to the pandemic, see DCF Emergency Rule EMR2009.
- It is still vital to take all steps necessary to address a child’s health and dental care needs according to specific recommendations by a child’s physician or dentist, but routine appointments can be rescheduled due to the pandemic.

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?

- Yes, an exception must be requested and submitted to DCF for approval.

How do I make quarantine decisions?

- Three entities can order an official quarantine:
  - The local public health department
  - Law enforcement
  - Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS)
- WI DHS has issued guidelines on quarantine here: https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/dph/memos/communicable-diseases/2020-08.pdf
• If a provider were to need to implement an official quarantine or self-quarantine for staff, residents or an entire facility, the Department of Children and Families (DCF) is available to assist in any exceptions that may need to be granted to achieve this status.

Can I reallocate staff between programs or specialty areas?

• Yes. All staff need to have background checks outlined in current rule.
• As described in DCF 52.02(2), DCF 57.02(2), and 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, https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/forms.

Can group homes share staff?

• Group Homes that would like to share staff between agencies and programs would be required to complete the following:
  o Background Information Disclosure form: 57.17(2)(d)
  o Background Check: 57.17(2)(d)
  o A completed application: DCF 57.17(2)(a)
• Exceptions would need to be submitted to DCF for the following:
  o Orientation: 57.16(1) Orientation. Specify when it would be completed.
  o References: 57.15(2)(b)
  o Addresses and phone numbers of references: 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, https://dcf.wisconsin.gov/cwlicensing/forms.

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?

• If a resident has symptoms of COVID-19 or a known exposure, immediately contact your local health department. 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.