



Head Start Forward: COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist for Operating Head Start Programs (August 2021)

Background:

This Head Start Forward COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist is designed to help you review your program's protocols for COVID-19 as you return to in-person services or prepare for a new program year. The checklist is relevant for all Head Start programs, including those located in schools, centers, and family child care homes. This checklist references

- [Caring for Our Children National Standards](#) (CFOC Std.), including the [COVID-19 Modifications](#) (CFOC-M Std.)
- [Head Start Program Performance Standards](#) (HSPPS)
- [COVID-19 Guidance for Operating Early Care and Education/Child Care Programs](#) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CDC)

Your local jurisdiction's health department and/or licensing agency may have orders, recommendations, or laws that vary from those of national organizations. Your program should follow the most stringent applicable guidance related to COVID-19.

Since this checklist is focused on COVID-19 protocols, it is not comprehensive. Your program should use this checklist in conjunction with a more comprehensive health and safety checklist such as the California Childcare Health Program (CCHP) [Health and Safety Checklist](#) and the [Office of Head Start Health and Safety Screener](#).

The 39 items are divided into 10 groups:

1. Policies/Communication/Emergency Planning
2. Preventive Health: Wellness Care and Social Determinants of Health
3. Transportation
4. Daily Health Check
5. Care and Supervision: Ratios, Cohorts, Consistent Groups, and Infants
6. Personal Health Habits
7. Environmental Health and Prevention of Infectious Disease
8. Healthy Indoor Air
9. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting
10. Service Providers and Community Partners.

Each item is referenced with the relevant guidance—the CFOC or CFOC-M standard(s), the HSPPS number(s) or the CDC document.

Directions on How to Complete the Checklist:

Check 'Yes' if your program meets the standard and 'No' if the program does not meet the standard.

Legend:

CFOC Std. = Caring for Our Children National Standards

CFOC-M Std. = COVID-19 Modifications to Caring for Our Children Standards

HSPPS = Head Start Program Performance Standards

CDC = Centers for Disease Control and Prevention COVID-19 Guidance

National Center on

Health, Behavioral Health, and Safety



COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist Items

Yes No

Policies/Communication/Emergency Planning			
1.	Health and safety policies have been reviewed and are up-to-date. CFOC 9.2.1.2 , 9.2.4.4 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
2.	Changes to health and safety policies and practices are communicated to families. CFOC 9.2.1.2 , 2.3.1.1 HSPPS 1302.41 CDC		
3.	Staff receive information, training, and support on implementing COVID-19 related practices and policies. CFOC-M Std. 1.6.0.1 CFOC 9.2.4.4 HSPPS 1302.47		
4.	Signs describing how to stop the spread of germs (e.g., properly washing hands and properly wearing a mask) are posted in visible locations. Signs are clear, easy-to-understand, use pictures, and are in primary languages spoken by staff and families. Accommodations are made for people with visual impairments. CFOC-M Std. 7.1 CFOC 2.4.1.2 , 3.2.2.3 CDC		
5.	A communication system is in place for families and staff to report absences related to COVID-19 to the program. CDC		
6.	A communication system is in place for the program to report COVID-19 cases and outbreaks to staff and families (e.g., group texts, emails, phone calls). CFOC 9.2.4.3 HSPPS 1302.41 CDC		
7.	Communications and resources are culturally relevant, in plain language, and available in appropriate languages and accessible formats. CFOC 9.2.1.2 HSPPS 1302.41 CDC		
8.	The Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) or Disaster Preparedness Plan is up-to-date and includes steps to take when a child or staff member has been exposed to someone with COVID-19, has symptoms of COVID-19, or tests positive for COVID-19. CFOC 9.2.4.3 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
9.	The EOP or Disaster Preparedness Plan is made in collaboration with local partners (e.g., state and local public health departments, licensing regulators). CFOC 9.2.4.3 CDC		
Preventive Health: Wellness Care and Social Determinants of Health			
10.	Resources that support vaccination are shared with staff and families. CFOC-M Std. 1.6.0.1 HSPPS 1302.41 , 1302.46 , 1302.93 CDC		



COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist Items

Yes No

11.	Staff and family concerns about COVID-19 vaccinations are discussed in a culturally appropriate and non-judgmental manner. CFOC-M Std. 1.6.0.1 HSPPS 1302.41 , 1302.46 , 1302.93 CDC		
12.	Children are up-to-date with well child visits, routine childhood vaccines, developmental screening, and dental appointments. CFOC-M Std. 1.6.0.1 HSPPS 1302.42		
13.	Concerns about food and housing security, employment, and safety are discussed with families. Resources that support food and housing security, employment, and safety are shared with staff and families. CFOC 9.4.1.19 , 9.2.4.3 HSPPS 1302.46		
Transportation			
14.	Children transported on buses are seated one child per row, when possible, unless they are from the same household. Drivers and bus aides practice routine safety protocols (e.g., hand hygiene, masks). Staff and children are screened for symptoms of COVID-19 or illness before boarding the vehicle. See OHS Information Memorandum on Head Start Transportation Services and Vehicles During the COVID-19 Pandemic . CFOC-M Std. 6.5.2.3 CDC		
Daily Health Check			
15.	Staff and children are screened for symptoms of COVID-19 or illness before entering the facility. CFOC-M Std. 1.7.0.2 , 3.6.1.2 CFOC 3.1.1.1 HSPPS 1302.42 , 1302.47 CDC		
16.	People who are breastfeeding infants are screened for COVID-19 or illness before entering the facility. CDC		
17.	Direct service providers are screened for symptoms of COVID-19 or illness before entering the facility. Nonessential visitors, volunteers, and people attending external group activities have limited access. CFOC-M Std. 2.3.1.2 HSPPS 1302.47 , 1302.94 CDC		
18.	If checking for fever, a no-contact thermometer is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. CFOC-M Std. 3.6.1.3 HSPPS 1302.47		
Care and Supervision: Ratios, Cohorts, Consistent Groups, and Infants			
19.	Children are grouped into cohorts with assigned staff, and these groupings stay the same from day to day. CFOC-M Std. 1.1.1.1 , 1.1.1.2 , 1.1.1.3 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
20.	There is minimal or no interaction between cohorts. CFOC-M Std. 1.1.1.1 , 1.1.1.2 , 1.1.1.3 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		



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COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist Items

Yes No

		Yes	No
21.	Staff wear masks and washable smocks when feeding and holding infants. Extra smocks for staff and changes of clothing for children are available in case they get soiled during feeding. Eye protection is available for staff caring for infants (e.g., glasses, goggles, face shield). CFOC-M Std. 4.3.1.8		
22.	Guidance from state and local health departments and the licensing agency on group size is followed. CFOC-M Std. 1.1.1.1 , 1.1.1.2 , 1.1.1.3 HSPPS 1302.21 , 1302.23		
Personal Health Habits			
23.	Adults, including staff, visitors, and family members, wear a well-fitted face mask indoors. Children 2 years or older who can remove their own mask wear a well-fitted face mask indoors except when eating or sleeping. CFOC-M Std. 1.1.1.1 , 1.1.1.2 , 1.1.1.3 , 1.6.0.1 , 1.6.0.3 , 6.5.2.1 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
24.	A supply of masks is available at the entrance for children and families who do not have masks. CFOC-M Std. 6.5.2.1 HSPPS 1302.42		
25.	Children and staff practice proper hand hygiene before and after touching their mask or assisting with masks. CDC		
26.	Adults and children wash their hands or use hand sanitizer upon entering the building. CFOC-M Std. 6.5.2.1 HSPPS 1302.47		
27.	Hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol is next to sign in/out sheets and available in areas without access to soap and running water. CFOC-M Std. 6.5.2.1 HSPPS 1302.47		
28.	Children are spaced apart when seated for meals and snacks if possible. If space is limited, children eat in smaller groups with staggered mealtimes to allow more spacing between them. Children eat outdoors or in well-ventilated indoor spaces. CFOC-M Std. 4.5.0.4 CDC		
Environmental Health and Prevention of Infectious Disease			
29.	Children are positioned alternating head to toe on mats, cots, or cribs for naps. CFOC-M Stds. 1.1.1.1 , 1.1.1.2 , 1.1.1.3 HSPPS 1302.47		
30.	Outdoor environments are used for activities and meals as much as possible. CFOC-M Stds. 1.1.1.1 , 1.1.1.2 , 1.1.1.3 HSPPS 1302.31 CDC		



COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist Items

Yes No

Healthy Indoor Air			
31.	Windows and doors are open if it is safe. Windows accessible to children open less than 4 inches or have window guards so that children cannot climb out. CFOC 5.1.3.2 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
32.	Fans are available to increase air flow in and out of open windows if a heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system is not present or is inadequate. If fans are present, they are not accessible to children. CFOC 5.2.1.1 , 5.2.1.7 HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
33.	The HVAC system has been inspected by a qualified contractor. The HVAC system is operated and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions. CFOC 5.2.1.3		
34.	Portable air cleaners with HEPA filters are operated and maintained according to the manufacturer's instructions if there is no HVAC system or it is inadequate. CDC		
Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting			
35.	The facility is cleaned routinely according to CFOC recommendations. CFOC 3.3.0.1 , Appendix K HSPPS 1302.47		
36.	High touch surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, railings, grab bars) are cleaned and disinfected at least daily. CFOC Appendix K HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
37.	The product used to disinfect has an EPA registration number and is on the EPA List N for products effective against coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19). See About List N: Disinfectants for Coronavirus (COVID-19) . CDC		
Service Providers and Community Partners			
38.	Child care health consultants and members of the Head Start Health Services Advisory Committee are engaged for up-to-date COVID-19 information and guidance, for reviews and updates of health and safety policies, for staff development, and for support in vaccination efforts. CFOC-M Std. 1.6.0.1 HSPPS 1302.42		
39.	Infant and early childhood mental health consultants are engaged to help the program promote resilience, provide support, and address the social, emotional, and mental health challenges faced by children, families, and staff during COVID-19. CFOC-M Std. 1.6.0.3 HSPPS 1302.45		

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