



Children's Corner

Physical Distancing When Caring For Children

Physical distancing means that staff are careful about how they have physical contact with children in order to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Maintaining physical distancing does not mean being socially distant. Caring for children must be about relationships and emotional support. So, while we must be careful about physical contact with the children we cannot be socially distant from them. Caring for children means staying close enough to supervise them and keep them safe. Particularly, in these stress times, we must create a warm, calm, and loving environment. Children need extra nurturing now.

Please remember that now all adults – not children – must wear a mask while at working at a child care program. Please see *Children May Be Afraid of Masks. Here's How to Help* to understand how children may react to adults wearing face covering and how we can help them feel safe while we wear masks.

What can you do?

- If possible, keep the same children in the same group with the same caregivers and keep different groups separate.
- Try to limit groups to no more than ten children staff.
- Instead of welcoming children with a high fives and hugs, say hello with a silly dance that you each do.
- Try to avoid close face-to-face contact with children. A child can sit on your lap facing out into the room or sit next to you.
- Keep as much space with children as possible by limiting the number of children in an area or at a table. You may need to rearrange the room.
- When sitting at a table, put an empty chair between children.
- Limit the number of toys available at any time. Put out some toys for an hour or hour and a half. Then exchange them for different materials.
- Do not put out toys that attract a group of children. Solitary play and not sharing is the current norm.
- Only have easy to clean toys. Clean and sanitize toys after each use.
- Toys should not be brought from home but remember the importance of children having their comfort objects.
- Sensory play is soothing and alleviates stress. Give children their own individual bags of Play-Doh, a small container of water with some toys, or a small bin of sand. Sanitize the containers after each use.
- Do not have circle time. You can talk about the weather when you are outside.
- If you want to do an activity with a small group, space out hula-hoops or string loops on the floor.
- Read individually to children.
- Go outside as much as possible. It is easier to keep children apart in an open space than in a small playground. Go outside in smaller groups if the space is small.
- When zipping coats to go outside, stand behind the child and reach your arms around to the front to zip and avoid face-to-face contact.

- Meal and snacks – children should be served by staff wearing gloves. There should not be family style dining.
- Nap time – try to keep cots/mats 6 feet apart. Place children so that heads face their neighbor's toes and toes face their neighbor's heads.

Be aware that we are asking children to completely change their behavior. They can't play closely together or hold hands. For now, they don't have to share toys with their friends. It is confusing. We have to go our best to help children understand that they have to limit their contact with their friends.