



COVID-19 Health and Safety Checklist for Operating Head Start Programs

Head Start programs can use this checklist to review their COVID-19 protocols. It is relevant for all Head Start programs, including those located in schools, centers, and family child care homes. This checklist references guidance and protocols, including from:

- [Caring for Our Children \(CFOC\)](#)
- [Head Start Program Performance Standards \(HSPPS\)](#)
- [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#) from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Local health departments or licensing agencies may issue recommendations or policies that vary from those of national organizations. Programs should follow the most stringent applicable guidance for 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 items in this checklist are divided into 8 groups:

1. Policies, Communication, and Emergency Planning
2. Preventive Health: Wellness Care and Social Determinants of Health
3. Daily Health Check
4. Personal Health Habits
5. Environmental Health and Prevention of Infectious Disease
6. Healthy Indoor Air
7. Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting
8. 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.

How to Use the Checklist

Check “Yes” if your program meets the standard and “No” if it does not.

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



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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	
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	



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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		
Daily Health Check			
14.	Staff and children are screened for symptoms of COVID-19 or illness before entering the program. CFOC-M Std. 1.7.0.2 , 3.6.1.2 CFOC 3.1.1.1 HSPPS 1302.42 , 1302.47 CDC		
15.	If checking for fever, a digital thermometer is used according to the manufacturer's instructions. CFOC-M Std. 3.6.1.3 HSPPS 1302.47		
Personal Health Habits			
16.	Adults and children wash their hands upon entering the building. CFOC-M Std. 6.5.2.1 , 3.2.2.1 HSPPS 1302.47		
17.	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		
18.	People who wear masks wear well-fitted masks.. HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
19.	A supply of masks is available at the entrance for children and families who choose to wear masks. CFOC-M Std. 6.5.2.1 HSPPS 1302.42		
20.	Children and staff practice proper hand hygiene before and after touching their mask or assisting with masks. CDC		
Environmental Health and Prevention of Infectious Disease			
21.	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		
22.	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		
23.	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		
24.	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		



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25.	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		
26.	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			
27.	The facility is cleaned routinely according to CFOC recommendations. CFOC 3.3.0.1 , Appendix K HSPPS 1302.47		
28.	High touch surfaces are cleaned daily and during COVID-19 outbreaks high touch surfaces are disinfected at least daily. CFOC Appendix K HSPPS 1302.47 CDC		
29.	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			
30.	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		
31.	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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