



# Rhode Island Department of Human Services

## School Age Guidance for Fall 2020

Updated 8/26/2020

Rhode Island understands and values the importance of offering quality, school age child care for working families who depend on supervised care for their children outside of the typical school day. As we enter the 2020-2021 school year, the Department of Human Services is partnering with the RI Department of Education to support child care centers in providing safe, quality care under the COVID-19 guidelines and regulations. Below, we have highlighted two options for delivering school age child care in the fall, specifically before and after care.

### **\*Important Update to School-Age Guidance for Fall 2020\***

Face coverings play a critical role in mitigating risk related to COVID-19. Effective September 14, 2020, the RI Department of Human Services is requiring face coverings for all school-age children\* (in addition to staff) in all DHS-licensed child care programs, even when children are in stable groups and physically distanced (6+ feet apart.) Important to note: this guidance will not pertain to other younger age groups served in DHS-licensed child care facilities such as infants/toddlers and preschoolers whose language development is often dependent upon visual cues and prompts from peers modeling appropriate speech. Face coverings will be critical in mitigating the risks associated with school-age children participating in multiple stable pods due to their enrollment in a DHS-licensed child care facility and will mirror RIDE guidance for K-12 schools.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on children younger than age two; anyone who has trouble breathing; or anyone who is unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance.

Protective face coverings are not required for certain individuals, per [CDC guidelines](#), or for anyone for whom use of such face covering would be damaging to his or her health or inhibit an activity of daily living (e.g. eating.)

**Option A [Preferred]:** Public Schools/LEAs will “host” before and after school care with child care providers operating the programs onsite in a classroom. This will eliminate transportation concerns and mixing of stable groups across districts & schools.

- The child care provider will be responsible for coordinating directly with the LEA(s) to deliver programming at the school.
- DHS will work with the child care provider and LEA to temporarily license classroom space in their schools.
- Classroom space would need to meet DHS standards, and include:
  - A minimum of 35 sq. feet for each child served in the classroom
  - Appropriate ventilation system & access to natural light
  - Either direct access to a bathroom for children OR a staffing plan that accounts for accompanying children to a bathroom not housed within the classroom
- Create and implement a plan for supporting distance learning to accommodate full days of distance learning for school age children.

\*School-age children are defined by the RI Department of Human Services as any child at least five (5) years of age and in Kindergarten, but under sixteen (16) years of age. Important to note: a child who is between the ages of five (5) and six (6) years old, and not yet in Kindergarten, would be categorized as a preschool-age child.



# Rhode Island Department of Human Services

---

## School Age Guidance for Fall 2020

Updated 8/26/2020

*DHS licensed child care providers must maintain full compliance with all DHS child care licensing regulations re: staff qualifications, background checks, staff: child ratios and lesson planning at all times. The DHS-licensed child care provider would be responsible for administering the [Screening Tool](#) on all children and staff in the before/after care program, as outlined in the [DHS COVID-19 Emergency Child Care Regulations](#).*

Currently, there are 68 DHS-licensed child care programs in LEA's, licensed to serve more than 6,000 children. This is a successful model for many child care programs in the state and is a recommended strategy for DHS-licensed child care providers to offer before/after care for the 2020-2021 school year.

**Option B:** Child care providers will deliver before and after school at their DHS licensed site, in coordination with local schools. If your local school does not have space available or one of the parties are unwilling to consider Option A (above,) DHS-licensed child care providers would operationalize the [DHS COVID-19 Emergency Child Care Regulations](#) and [Guidelines](#) for delivering care at their respective DHS-licensed site.

- Providers would implement DHS COVID-19 Emergency Child Care Regulations to ensure limited exposure across stable groups.
- Providers would adhere to the DHS stable group size of up to 20 children and implement physical distancing measures within the stable group for children as much as possible.
- Providers would group children from the same school as much as possible. Providers should avoid to the best extent possible co-mingling children from different schools at any point throughout the day.
- Stable groups must maintain 14 feet of distance or be separated by a wall/divider/partition.
- If a child care program is interested in offering before & after care, they will need to create a plan for remote learning days to demonstrate their ability to serve children for full days.
- Child Care Provider will follow RIDE's COVID-19 Transportation Guidance if offering transportation for children served on a school bus. For 15-passenger vans, driver must have a chauffeur's license and either 1) be part of the child's stable group (teacher,) or 2) maintain 6 feet of distance from children/passengers. 15-passenger vans can meet the maximum 13 child seating capacity if they are all masked and part of the same stable group.
- Child care provider will adhere to all [CDC guidelines for cleaning & sanitation](#).

\*School-age children are defined by the RI Department of Human Services as any child at least five (5) years of age and in Kindergarten, but under sixteen (16) years of age. Important to note: a child who is between the ages of five (5) and six (6) years old, and not yet in Kindergarten, would be categorized as a preschool-age child.