



# OUT-OF-SCHOOL TIME AND CHILD CARE NAVIGATION GUIDE FOR PARENTS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC.

Developed by ENHANCE MT



A look inside  
this Guide:

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FOR FAMILIES  
TO CONSIDER**

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## Information For Families

WE KNOW THAT CHILDREN THRIVE WHEN THEY CAN LEARN AND GROW IN HEALTHY AND SAFE ACTIVITIES, PROGRAMS AND ENRICHING CHILD CARE SETTINGS. BUT THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ARE PUTTING STRESS ON FAMILIES WHO ARE ATTEMPTING TO NAVIGATE NEW PUBLIC HEALTH SAFETY PROTOCOLS IN CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AND YOUTH ACTIVITIES.

Significant considerations should be given to ensure child care and programming provided during this time are executed safely and in ways that advance a commitment to creating a positive and equitable learning and enriching environment for all youth.

As more and more businesses, organizations, and events reopen across our communities, you may be considering or needing to send your child back to child care, out-of-school care, or other organized youth activities. You may be wondering how programs will be keeping children, staff, and the community safe.

There's no right or wrong answer, as every family is in a completely unique situation. At the end of the day, every parent needs to decide what's best for their family.

This guide is intended to offer suggestions for you and your family to consider while making this decision. We will cover what programs are required to do, and what they are strongly encouraged to do, in order to keep everyone safe. We will also cover how you and your child can be ready to participate and have a safe, fun experience.



## Suggestions for Families to Consider

### Consider your family's unique risk

Is your child immunocompromised? Is anyone in your immediate family immunocompromised? Contact your pediatrician. Your pediatrician can help you make decisions based on your child's medical history, your family circumstances, ensuring immunizations are up to date and by confirming that growth and development are on track.

Contact the program you are considering using for your child care or organized youth activity needs. Ask about their COVID-19 policies.

Quality programs will provide you with their COVID-19 protocols and procedures to help answer your questions and concerns.

#### Questions to Ask Providers

- How do they screen children and staff for symptoms?
- What happens if symptoms are detected?
- What are their sanitation and disinfecting procedures?
- How have they adapted their program to practice social distancing?
- What are their group or cohort sizes?
- What are their cancellation and refund policies?
- For school aged programs; Is the program school specific? School specific means children from different schools are not mixed. Enrollment is limited to one school, or children from different schools are kept separate.



# What All Programs Must Do

## Face coverings

**The requirement:** Per Montana's statewide directive, all businesses, including child care businesses, and indoor organized youth programs shall require and take reasonable measures to ensure that all staff, children aged 5 years and older, and parents wear a face covering that covers their mouth and nose at all times while entering or remaining in any indoor spaces. Children between the ages of two and four, however, are not required but strongly encouraged to wear a face covering. Children under the age of two should not wear a face covering

### You will see or experience:

- program staff wearing face coverings during indoor activities, and at times when social distancing is not possible.
- programs requiring children aged five and older to wear face coverings while indoors except during meal or nap times or during times of physical activity.
- programs asking parents to provide face coverings for their child, or the program may provide them to participants if parents can not provide.
- if a child forgets their face mask, programs will offer either paper face masks or cloth face masks that will be washed after use.
- visitors to the program or people dropping-off/picking-up will be asked to wear face coverings. Parents should exit quickly after drop-off and practice social (physical) distancing as they arrive and depart.
- cloth face coverings should NOT be put on babies and children under age two because of the danger of suffocation.
- face masks are not required outdoors, as long as physical distancing guidelines are observed

## Health assessments upon check-in and monitoring throughout the day

**The recommendation:** Programs should check temperatures and/or screen for other symptoms. Children with possible coronavirus symptoms will not be allowed to attend the program. Children may return to the program after they have received clearance from the health department or medical provider or they have been symptom and fever free for 3-days without the use of medication.

### You will see or experience:

- program staff taking children's temperatures at drop-off or throughout the day.
- staff are required to take and document their own temperature each day at the beginning of their shift.
- programs asking families to monitor their child's health and might ask that families to check temperatures at home. Children and staff with a fever of 100.4 or above or persistent cough will not be allowed to participate in programs and will be sent home. Sick participants will be separated from the group with supervision at all times, until the sick person can be picked up sent home
- use of barriers such as clear plastic partition may be used in temperature checks
- if a child does get sick during the program, parents will be notified immediately and asked to pick up their child. Sick children are separated from the other children while waiting for parent pick-up.

# What All Programs Are Strongly Encouraged To Do

## Physical distancing

**The recommendation:** Encourage physical distancing of at least 6 feet in congested areas.

**You may see or experience:**

- programs using multiple locations rather than one central location
- programs altering activities or schedules to eliminate crowding
- programs taking place outdoors all or most of the day
- programs changing drop-off/pick-up procedures to eliminate parents gathering in groups to support social distancing and decrease shared surface touches and the spread of infection.
- programs eliminating the sharing of items between children and disinfecting toys, games, balls and other items throughout the day.
- staff avoiding any physical contact with children including high fives, fist bumps or side hugs. In general staff should never offer to have children sit on their lap, give “piggy back rides” or touch a child in place that would be covered by a swimsuit,

## Small Groups

One of the most important ways to limit the spread of the virus is to limit the amount of interaction with others.

**The recommendation:** Children should be kept in small cohorts and avoid mixing with other cohorts. If people can stay 6 feet apart, then groups can be up to 50 people.

**What that means:** As parents know, it’s not easy to keep children 6 feet apart! In most situations, you will see programs maintaining consistent small groups of children, with no more than 10 people total per group, including staff. Outdoor play will be in staggered shifts, and equipment should be sanitized between groups. All classrooms will remain separated (both indoors and outdoors) to reduce the number of children in one area and to reduce the possibility of viral transmission. The classrooms will be designed to allow children to play alone or in smaller groups.

## Increased Sanitation and Disinfecting Procedures

Providers have been instructed to develop a plan to clean and disinfect more frequently including cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched surfaces; and washing hands often with soap and water.

**The recommendation:** Clean and sanitize between cohorts or groups. Limit cross contamination from supplies or toys. Avoid using outside play structures or toys that are difficult to sanitize between groups.

**You may see or experience:**

- programs limiting the use of play materials that cannot be disinfected, such as play-doh, sand tables, or cloth toys.
- each child’s meal will be plated and served by staff, instead of served family-style. Most food served will be individually wrapped or packaged.
- The addition of specified hand washing or hand sanitizing times throughout the day

# How You and Your Child Can Be Ready

There are some simple things you can do to make sure you and your child feel ready for group activities.

Communicate with your child care provider, out of school time provider, or other organized youth activity operator!

Read information carefully, even if your child has participated in this activity before.

Make sure you know about any changes to drop-off and pick-up times, locations, or procedures.

Practice the skills your child needs to be safe and successful in group activities.

- using a mask or face covering
- coughing or sneezing into arm or shoulder
- washing hands thoroughly
- keeping track of belongings
- giving other people extra space

# Stay Safe Montana

Learn more at [ENHANCEMT.org](https://www.enhancemt.org)