



May 17, 2021

In light of recent changes to the statewide guidance, EEC is providing the following answers to commonly asked questions regarding the April version of the Minimum Requirements and Playbook.

EEC is continuing to develop new resources as quickly as possible to support programs during the ongoing transition out of pandemic conditions.

Q: Do children have to wear masks outside?

A: No. On May 17th, 2021, after consultation with the MA COVID Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, the Governor announced that given the low rate of outdoor transmission of COVID-19, children **no longer have to wear masks when outdoors, even if distance cannot be maintained.** Effective May 18, this guidance update applies to recess, physical education, youth sports, and outdoor learning environments. Adults must continue to wear masks outdoors when distancing cannot be maintained. **At this time, children and adults should continue to wear masks indoors.**

Q: Can shared materials be re-introduced into the child care space?

A: Yes. On May 17th, 2021, after consultation with the MA COVID Command Center's Medical Advisory Board, the Governor announced that given the low likelihood of surface transmission of COVID-19, programs no longer have to avoid sharing objects. This includes classroom materials, items for physical education, and art supplies. Shared objects no longer have to be cleaned or disinfected between use and should follow the updated cleaning guidance outlined below.

Q. How frequently do programs have to clean spaces or surfaces?

Based on CDC guidance and updated information on the low likelihood of surface transmission, as of May 17th, 2021, programs only need to clean high touch surfaces (door handles, bus seats, drinking fountains) and shared objects within the program and on program transport vehicles once a day, excluding certain circumstances. If programs are located in an area of high transmission of COVID-19, then they may consider cleaning more frequently, or cleaning **and** disinfecting surfaces and objects once a day. Similarly, for areas where masks are not worn (i.e., lunch areas), programs may consider cleaning surfaces between use. If a surface or object is visibly soiled, it should be immediately cleaned. If someone in the program in the past 24 hours has confirmed to have COVID-19, the spaces (i.e., classroom, bus and lunch area) they were in should be cleaned and disinfected. If disinfecting, ensure **safe and correct use** and storage of cleaning products, including storing products securely away from children.

Q: Can parents/guardians go into the child care space?

A: Yes. Programs may choose to allow visitors, including parents/guardians, to re-enter the child care space as long as they adhere to the health and safety protocols. Programs have the discretion to decide which visitors will be allowed back into the program and under what conditions. Programs may require certain specific protocols during drop off, pick up, for conferences, or other scenarios as they deem necessary. All protocols and expectations should be communicated clearly to visitors, including families.

Q: Can programs have activities with independent service providers (like music or art classes)?

A: Yes. Programs may choose to allow visitors, including service providers, to re-enter the program space to provide classes or services as long as they adhere to the health and safety protocols. Programs have the discretion to decide which visitors will be allowed back into the program and under what conditions. Programs may require that services be performed in designated areas only. All protocols and expectations should be communicated clearly to visitors, including service providers.

Q: Do children have to be 6 feet apart when eating indoors?

A: Yes. All individuals must maintain 6 ft of physical distance when unmasked and indoors unless a physical barrier (for instance, plexiglass or similar) can be positioned between children when sitting closer together.

Q: Can groups of children mix at the beginning and end of the day?

A: Yes. Programs may choose to mix groups. Programs have the discretion to decide which groups will be mixed and under what conditions. It is still advisable to minimize the mixing of groups as much as possible because in the event that a COVID-19 positive test occurs when groups have been mixed, more individuals are potentially impacted.

Q: Can a staff member move from classroom to classroom?

A: Yes. Programs may choose to move staff members from class to class. Programs have the discretion to decide which adults will ‘float’ and under what conditions. It is advisable that fully vaccinated adults are used in float positions.