



Office of Children and Family Services

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

SHEILA J. POOLE
Commissioner

September 16, 2021

Dear Provider:

This letter contains important health and safety updates for your child care program. Please read this information carefully as it contains information on a new emergency regulation regarding mandatory masking in child care settings.

Child care programs serve children under the age of 12 who are not yet eligible for vaccination. Thus, COVID-19 prevention strategies remain critical to protect children and staff. Therefore, effective September 16, 2021 OCFS has implemented an emergency regulation mandating all people in a child care setting to wear a mask indoors. The mandate applies to all people age 2 and older who are able to medically tolerate a face covering, regardless of vaccination status. The requirement applies to OCFS licensed and registered child care and enrolled legally exempt group programs.

This decision by OCFS was not made lightly and is based on health and safety concerns for you and the children and families you serve. These requirements are in line with the recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). On July 27, 2021, the CDC released updated guidance that included a recommendation for everyone ages 2 and older in areas of substantial or high transmission to wear a mask in public indoor places, even if they are fully vaccinated. This guidance can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7030e2.htm>. CDC issued this new guidance due to a rise in the number of COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations around the country and because of new information about the Delta variant. In recent weeks we have learned that the Delta variant is highly contagious-- more than twice as contagious as previous variants. On August 25, 2021, the CDC further updated guidance for early childhood programs recommending universal indoor mask use in areas of substantial to high transmission, regardless of vaccination status. For further details, click here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/child-care-guidance.html>.

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic and eliminate the need for health and safety precautions such as face coverings. Vaccination among eligible individuals can help child care programs protect staff and children in their care, as well as their families. Please continue to encourage staff and families to be vaccinated. For information about the vaccine, and to remain up-to date on COVID-19 guidance, please visit: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Thank you for your commitment to the health and safety of the children in your program throughout this challenging time. If you have any questions, please reach out to your regulator.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Janice Molnar".

Janice M. Molnar, Ph.D.
Deputy Commissioner
Division of Child Care Services