COVID-19 Exclusion Guidance for Child Care Programs

New York State has shortened isolation and quarantine periods for most people to five days if they can wear a well-fitting face mask. Since young children cannot consistently wear well-fitting masks, there are stricter rules for when children and staff can return to child care programs if they are sick or after being exposed to someone with COVID-19. The following is a summary of child care program exclusion and return requirements.

Definitions
- **Isolation** is for people who have symptoms of or test positive for COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status.
- **Quarantine** is for people who were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19.
- **Exclusion** is the time the child or staff cannot attend the child care program.
- A **close contact** is someone who has been within 6 feet of someone who has COVID-19 for a total of 15 or more minutes over a 24-hour period, regardless of face mask use.
- **Fully vaccinated** means two weeks after your single-dose vaccine or second dose of a two-dose vaccine. For information on how to quarantine and isolate, including precautions that should be taken and available resources, visit **on.nyc.gov/quarantine-isolation**.

Excluding Children Who Test Positive for COVID-19 or Have Symptoms
Children who test positive for COVID-19, or have COVID-19 symptoms but were not tested, may return to the program when **all** of the following are met:
- It is **after Day 10** (where Day 1 is the day **after** symptoms began or, if they have no symptoms, the day after their test date).
- Their symptoms have improved.
- They have not had a fever for the prior 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medication.

Children who have COVID-19 symptoms, test negative for COVID-19 (if using at-home tests, they must have two negative tests, taken at least 24-hours apart) and are not currently excluded due to a recent close contact (see the following **section**) can return to the program if they have not had a fever in the past 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine.

Excluding Children Who Were Close Contacts of Someone With COVID-19
Children **ages 2 to 5** who are close contacts may return to the child care program when **all** of the following are met:
- It is **after Day 5** (where Day 1 is the day **after** their last close contact).
- They have no COVID-19 symptoms.

- They test negative for COVID-19 on Day 5 or later (if using at-home tests, they must take two tests at least 24 hours apart on days 4 and 5 or later).
- They are able to consistently wear a well-fitting mask.

Children ages 2 to 5 who do not meet these criteria may return to the program **after Day 10** after their last close contact.

Children **younger than 2** who are close contacts may return to the program **after Day 7** if they test negative for COVID-19 on Day 5 or later with a test administered by a health care provider (at-home tests cannot be used for this purpose). Otherwise, they may return **after Day 10**.

Children who are fully vaccinated, or who had COVID-19 in the last 90 days (as confirmed by a positive viral test) and recovered do not need to be excluded from child care programs even if they were in close contact with someone who has COVID-19. They must continue to wear a well-fitting mask while on-site at the child care program.

Excluding Staff Who Have Symptoms or Test Positive for COVID-19
Child care staff who test positive for COVID-19, or have COVID-19 symptoms but were not tested, may return to work when **all** of the following are met:
- It is **after Day 5** (where Day 1 is the day after symptoms began or, if they have no symptoms, the day after their test date).
- They have no COVID-19 symptoms or their symptoms are improving.
- They have not had a fever for the past 24 hours without use of fever-reducing medicine.
- They are able to wear a well-fitting mask.

Note: Testing is not required for staff to return to work.

Upon return to the program, they should take the following precautions for 10 days after their symptoms began (or if they had no symptoms, their test date):
- Practice physical distancing as much as possible.
- Wear a well-fitting mask.
- Stay as far away from others as possible (more than 6 feet) when removing their mask to eat or drink, ideally in a room without others present.

Staff who do not meet the above criteria may return to the program **after Day 10** after their symptoms began (or if they had no symptoms, their test date).

Excluding Staff Who Were Close Contacts of Someone With COVID-19
Staff who are fully vaccinated or had COVID-19 in the last 90 days (as confirmed by a positive viral test) and recovered can attend work even if they are identified as a close contact.

Staff who are **not** fully vaccinated must be excluded from the program and may return when **all** of the following are met:

- It is **after Day 5** (where Day 1 is the day after their last close contact).
- They are able to wear a well-fitting mask.

All staff who are identified as a close contact, whether or not required to be excluded from the program, should take additional precautions for 10 days after their last close contact, including:
- Practice physical distancing as much as possible.
- Wear a well-fitting mask whenever they are around others.
- Stay as far away from others as possible (more than 6 feet) when removing their mask to eat or drink, ideally in a room without others present.
- Monitor for symptoms and, if symptoms develop, isolate and get tested right away.

It is also recommended that people who had close contact with someone who has COVID-19 get tested on Day 5 after the last close contact (except that staff who had COVID-19 in the past 90 days need to get tested only if they develop symptoms). If they test positive, they must isolate and be excluded from work.

Encourage staff to stay up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines so they stay healthy, protect our children (including those too young to be vaccinated) and continue to work. For more information about COVID-19 vaccines, including eligibility for boosters and third doses, visit **nyc.gov/covidvaccine**.

Encourage Consistent Mask Use
Face masks remain critical to preventing the spread of COVID-19. Children age 2 and older should wear a well-fitting mask of two or more layers that covers both their nose and mouth. Encourage staff to wear a higher-grade mask, such as an N95 or KN95, or a cloth mask over a disposable mask to increase fit and protection. Wearing a well-fitting mask is particularly important during the 10 days after a COVID-19 exposure and days 6 to 10 following exclusion due to COVID-19 symptoms or confirmed infection. For more information about masks, visit **on.nyc.gov/face-masks**.

The NYC Health Department may change recommendations as the situation evolves.　　2.3.22