

Fall 2020 Guidance for 3-K and Pre-K Programs, Version 1

(Released July 10, 2020)

Note: *This guidance applies to all early childhood programs contracted by the NYC Department of Education (DOE) to provide 3-K and pre-K services during the DOE school year.*

EarlyLearn center-based programs that transitioned from the Administration for Children's Services (ACS) and are now contracted by the DOE to provide year-round services to eligible infants, toddlers, 3-year-olds, and 4-year-olds should refer to DECE's [initial summer 2020 guidance](#) released on July 8, 2020.

Introduction

Together with families, program leaders, and partner agencies, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) is in the process of determining how we can best meet the needs of NYC's children, families, and program staff in Fall 2020.

Over 450 program leaders participated in our NYCEEC Directors' Virtual Roundtables in June. Through the roundtables, many program leaders asked that the DOE share provisional information on Fall 2020 as soon as possible to support their planning. We are sharing this initial guidance to give early childhood program leaders more specific information on what we know and don't know about what contracted 3-K and pre-K services will look like in the fall and to support programs' important planning efforts over the summer months. We know that you will have many questions, particularly around budgeting for this fall; we plan to provide additional guidance and information throughout the summer.

This guidance is intended to align to and supplement the current [New York State Interim COVID-19 Guidance for Child Care and Day Camp Programs](#) ("NYS June 2020 guidance"), which is subject to change. **Prior to re-opening, all NYC early childhood programs must train their staff in the [NYS June 2020 guidance](#), complete an affirmation online, and complete and post the [NYS Business Reopening Safety Plan Template](#)** (in addition to updating your existing safety plan). Programs should also continue to check the [NYC Health COVID-19 page](#) for updates, as requirements may change as we learn more about COVID-19 and the best ways to reduce transmission and keep New Yorkers safe.

Many of the typical requirements for DOE-contracted early childhood programs will remain in place in the fall, while others will need to be modified. Programs should still refer to the [3-K and Pre-K for All Policy Handbook](#), along with relevant regulations, including [Article 47](#) or [Article 43](#) of the NYC Health Code (for center-based programs) and [Part 416](#) of the NYS Child Day Care Regulations (for Group Family Day Care programs). However, where expectations differ, you should adhere to the most recent guidance issued by the DECE, the most recent guidance issued by New York State, and the most recent guidance issued by the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH). **All guidance is subject to revision and approval by City, State and Federal regulatory and funding agencies at any time.**

The DECE's mission, vision, and commitment to quality, as described in our [Early Childhood Framework for Quality \(EFQ\)](#), will remain the same as we resume services in the fall. At the same time, it is our shared

responsibility to recognize and respond to the collective and individual trauma experienced by the NYC early childhood community as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, including the disproportionate impacts that the pandemic has had on Black and Latino/a/x communities. The DECE recognizes that the needs of each family, program, and community are different. Additionally, we know that young children learn through play and in the context of relationships with caring adults. In times of stress and change, it is even more important that we support young children with safe, nurturing and predictable environments. As such, we intend to provide as much flexibility to programs as possible to decide how services will be structured in a trauma-informed and equitable way, while maintaining and implementing necessary new health and safety standards.

Supporting the mental health and emotional well-being of your staff, children, and families is extremely important during this time. See [here](#) for free digital mental health resources for the duration of the COVID-19 pandemic. All New Yorkers can also connect with counselors at NYC Well, a free and confidential mental health support service. NYC Well staff are available 24/7 and can provide brief counseling and referrals to care in more than 200 languages:

- Call 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355)
- Text “WELL” to 65173
- Chat online at [NYC Well](#)

We value your input and want to be an effective resource for your program during this challenging time. If you have any questions or feedback, please contact us at earlychildhoodpolicy@schools.nyc.gov.

Key Planning Parameters

Enrollment & Learning Models

- All contracted programs will be expected to provide services, in some form, to **all** children and families **enrolled** in their DOE-funded classes in September. **No children or families should be dropped from program rosters at this time.**
- **The needs and preferences of your enrolled families will likely be different, and the services provided by programs will need to reflect these differences.** Some families may not be able or ready to send their child to a program for in-person learning in the fall; other families may need a full day and full week of care; others may be able to accommodate a more flexible schedule that includes a combination of in-person and remote learning.
- Programs will be able to serve enrolled children and families through **three potential learning models**:
 1. Full-time in-person learning
 2. Full-time remote learning
 3. Blended learning (a combination of in-person learning and remote learning)
- In a child’s early years, learning is most impactful when it takes place in person. **All contracted early childhood programs should plan to provide some level of in-person learning services in DOE-funded classrooms in the fall.** We anticipate that most programs will provide a combination of the three learning models listed above, depending on families’ needs, group size requirements, and staffing limitations.

- **Programs should provide in-person services to as many enrolled families as possible in the fall**, given family needs, group size requirements and staffing limitations. The DECE will issue further guidance this summer on how programs should prioritize children and families for in-person services in the event that it is not possible to provide in-person services to every family that wants it
- **Programs should be prepared to implement changes if the public health situation in NYC worsens, and in accordance with State and City guidance.** It is possible that if multiple individuals connected to a specific program become ill, or there is a widespread community outbreak of COVID-19, classrooms or programs may need to transition to a fully remote learning model for a period of time.

Staffing

- **Programs should plan to continue employing all staff currently on their DOE budgets in the fall**, but they may need to make adjustments to their current staffing plan.
- **Programs should comply with federal and state requirements, if applicable, regarding the provision of medical accommodations for staff members who request them.** [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\) guidance](#) regarding exposure and quarantine is useful in shaping medical accommodation policy decisions, and should be used to promote the health and safety of employees and children in programs. Programs should also discuss this issue with their own board or counsel as appropriate. Any staff who receive accommodations to work remotely should be tasked with providing remote learning services to children and families who are participating in a fully remote learning model, or in a blended learning model. The same staff members may provide remote learning services to children across multiple age groups. Programs should ensure that any staff working remotely have devices and internet access needed to perform their responsibilities.
- **Program staff who are feeling ill should not come to the program.** Programs will need to have substitute staff available on short notice if a staff member is not feeling well.
- In alignment with the [NYS June 2020 guidance](#) and DECE policy, **maximum group size and staff-to-child ratios** in DOE-funded classrooms will be as follows, until further notice:

Age	Staff	Max. Group Size
3-year-olds	2	15 (12 for Group Family Day Care programs)
4-year-olds	2	15 (12 for Group Family Day Care programs)

- **Children should stay in stable groups not to exceed the maximum group sizes above.** These groups must avoid coming into contact with each other during their time on-site. For the most part, there is not an expectation that young children will maintain physical distancing within their stable groups. However, during certain activities (e.g. meals, naptime), NYS health requirements mandate more physical space between children.

- **Adults should maintain a physical distance of 6 feet from each other, whenever possible.** Additionally, adults should avoid congregating in groups, whenever possible (e.g. during drop-off and pick-up routines, staff meetings, and breaks).
- For public health reasons and to support responsive caregiving, children should have consistency in their in-person and remote-learning services, such that the same staff members are regularly assigned to the same group of children. For in-person services, programs should **limit the number of classrooms** that are supported by any single staff member, including non-lead teachers.
- Programs must identify a **site safety monitor to oversee daily staff and child health checks** and track all people entering the facility. In programs that have existing nursing staff, nurses may be best qualified to fulfill this role, but this role can also be combined with other staff duties. Please see the Health and Safety section below for more information on daily health checks.
- Programs must identify **custodial or other staff to clean and disinfect throughout the day and maintain a cleaning and disinfection log on site**, especially in common areas such as shared bathrooms, onsite playgrounds, hallways, and on frequently touched surfaces.

Blended Learning

- Depending on families' needs, group size requirements, and staffing limitations, programs may need to offer a **blended learning model** to some enrolled children and families in the fall. This could include:
 - Split schedule with **alternating days** (i.e., in-person learning services on Tuesday and Thursday, and remote learning services on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday); or
 - Split schedule with **alternating weeks** (i.e., one week in-person and the next week remote)
- Remote learning activities can be planned and shared in advance with families and do not need to be delivered live. Please see the [Guidance for Remote Learning in 3-K and Pre-K](#) for information and suggestions on how program staff can effectively support remote learning. Additionally, [these suggestions](#) can support leaders and teachers in reflecting on their remote learning experiences to inform their communications and planning. Families are also encouraged to visit the [Learn at Home: Early Childhood](#) page for additional resources to support them in engaging their children in fun, educational experiences at home.
- Program staff will be expected to have **at least two remote interactions** per week with each enrolled family who is participating in the fully remote learning model (per [this guidance](#)).
- Program staff will be expected to have **at least one remote interaction** per week with each currently-enrolled family who is participating in the blended learning model.
- Programs should consider **equipment and materials necessary for remote learning**, and plan to supply materials for staff and children who may not have these resources at home. Examples may include art supplies, manipulatives, books, etc. Programs should have any supplies delivered first to their program address for auditing purposes before distributing to families.

Health and Safety (more detailed guidance will be shared with programs this summer)

- Programs should review the [DOHMH Checklist for Child Care Program Guidelines](#), as they will be expected to meet all requirements outlined in this document in the fall, in addition to relevant regulations, including [Article 47](#) or [Article 43](#) of the NYC Health Code (for center-based programs) and [Part 416](#) of the NYS Child Day Care Regulations (for Group Family Day Care programs).
- Upon re-opening the facility (5 to 10 days prior to resuming any child care), **programs should flush all faucets for at least 10 minutes.** Flush cold water from all outlets first, and then flush hot water.
- All children must have the following **before resuming in-person learning in the fall:**
 - Current [Emergency Contact Card](#) (“blue card”) that includes at least two emergency contacts, approved escorts, home language, and health-related information;
 - Current medical form (within 12 months of the date of re-entry);
 - Proof of completed immunizations, based on the age;
 - Children must meet at least the [provisional vaccination requirements](#) (1 dose from each series) to begin on-site services, and continue to obtain vaccinations based on the “catch-up” schedule
 - Written consent for staff to act and obtain appropriate health care in the event of an emergency;
 - *If applicable*, an individualized health care plan indicating specific emergency medications (i.e., an epinephrine auto-injector, asthma inhaler and/or nebulizer) to be administered for the child;
 - *If applicable*, an [Allergy Response Plan](#) identifying their allergy(ies) and detailing the steps that need to be taken; and
 - *If applicable*, all necessary documentation to allow trained medical personnel to administer over-the-counter or prescription medicine (for programs with a designated MAT trained staff member or nurse).
- **Staff must wear face coverings at all times** when interacting with children or families onsite, both indoors and outdoors. Reusable face coverings are strongly encouraged as they are best for the environment, most sustainable over time, and easier to disinfect.
- The DECE will share additional guidance this summer about children and face coverings.
- Programs must use classrooms for serving meals non-family style. **No food should be shared.**
- Programs must identify a **private, enclosed area for isolating anyone who becomes ill while onsite.** Additionally, programs must designate specific entrances and exits, and create distance and directional markers inside and outside of the program to support physical distancing.
- Some early childhood programs are co-located in buildings that are used for multiple purposes. Programs with shared spaces should collaborate with other groups using the facility to ensure all groups are following shared health and safety guidelines.
- **Daily health checks must happen for both children and staff upon arrival.** Child health checks must be documented and done before families leave in the morning (unless done remotely before

arrival). Staff checks should also be documented and completed upon staff’s arrival for their shift. Consider using these resources to document the [child health checks](#) and [staff health checks](#).

- If a **staff member or enrolled child tests positive for COVID-19**, programs must immediately notify the DOE, the DOHMH, and the [NYC Test and Trace Corps](#). More information on this notification process will be shared soon.
- In the event that a parent/guardian of a child must be isolated because they have tested positive for, or exhibited symptoms of, COVID-19, the parent/guardian must be advised that they cannot enter the site for any reason, including picking up their child.
 - If the parent/guardian – who is a member of the same household as the child – is exhibiting signs of COVID-19 or has been tested and is positive for the virus, utilize an emergency contact authorized by the parent/guardian to come pick up the child. **As a “close contact,” the child must not return to the program for the duration of the quarantine.**
 - If the parent/guardian– who is a member of the same household as the child – is being quarantined as a precautionary measure, without symptoms of the virus or a positive test result, staff should walk out or deliver the child to the parent/guardian at the boundary of, or outside, the premises. **As a “contact of a contact” the child may return to the program during the duration of the quarantine.**
 - If a child or their household member becomes symptomatic of COVID-19 and/or has a positive test result, **the child must quarantine and may not return or attend the program until after quarantine is complete.**
- **There is currently no testing requirement for a staff or child who has previously tested positive to return to a program after their quarantine is complete.** However, NYC recommends that all New Yorkers receive [COVID-19 diagnostic testing](#) whether or not they have symptoms or are at increased risk. It is not currently recommended that people who previously tested positive get retested, unless advised to do so by public health guidance or their health care provider.

Next Steps for 3-K and Pre-K Programs

Programs should use the key planning parameters above, along with the [NYS June 2020 guidance](#), and the [DOHMH Checklist for Child Care Program Guidelines](#), to begin to plan a program model for Fall 2020 that will best meet the needs of your children, families, and staff.

Critical steps for 3-K and pre-K programs to take now to support this Fall 2020 planning include to:

- **Distribute the [Family Schedule Needs Sample Survey](#) to each enrolled family** as soon as possible to assess their needs and interest in the three different learning models for the fall. Families should be asked to complete a separate survey for each enrolled child. The DECE will share more information soon on how programs should prioritize children and families for in-person services in the event that it is not possible to provide in-person services to every family who wants it in the fall. **Programs should not communicate to families which learning model they will be receiving in the fall until the DECE shares this information on priorities for in-person services.**

- **Note:** The DOE central office will also be sending a direct communication to all DOE students, including enrolled 3-K and pre-K families, in the coming weeks with more information on how to register for a fully remote learning model in the fall. Families should complete this survey for official DOE records. However, programs should still plan to use the [Family Schedule Needs Sample Survey](#) to gather their own information on families' needs and preferences.
- **Gather information on the anticipated needs of all staff members** on your DOE budget, including any staff who may seek accommodations in the fall based on your program's HR policies.
- Direct all **staff with outdated medical forms** to schedule physician appointments now.
- **Share information about medical and vaccination requirements with all enrolled families now**, and support families with referrals and community resources.
- **Encourage all adults affiliated with the program to get tested for COVID-19**, even if they have no symptoms. It will be especially beneficial for program staff to be tested prior to supporting in-person learning in the fall. More information about the free COVID-19 diagnostic test, and a map of available testing sites, is available [here](#).
- Prior to resuming in-person services, all NYC early childhood programs must train their staff in the [NYS June 2020 guidance](#), complete an affirmation online, and complete and post the [NYS Business Reopening Safety Plan Template](#) (in addition to updating your existing safety plan).

Next Steps for the DECE

A DECE staff member will be assigned to each 3-K and pre-K program to gather additional information and complete a virtual or in-person readiness check later this summer. **This readiness check must be successfully completed by a DECE staff member before any DOE-funded services resume in the fall.**

Together with our partner agencies, the DECE will release additional guidance in both written and webinar formats over the coming weeks and months to support our contracted programs' planning for the fall, including:

- A **program readiness checklist** that will be used in the readiness checks completed by DECE staff;
- A **program readiness planning tool** to begin to outline how enrolled children in DOE-funded classrooms will be served and how staffing requirements will be met in the fall;
- **Detailed health and safety guidance;**
- **Budget guidance;**
- **Attendance and enrollment guidance;**
- Guidance on **blended learning**, including the use of remote learning devices;
- Guidance on implementing **existing curriculum**; and
- Guidance on **using a trauma informed approach** to support staff, children/families, and learning.

Additionally, we commit to continuing to share best practices learned from our Regional Enrichment Centers (RECs) and Emergency Child Care Centers (ECCs) that have been providing care to the children of first responders, health care providers, transit workers, and other essential personnel since March 2020.