



COVID-19: Childcare and Out of School Time Vermont Forward Step 4 Summer 2021

Sally Kerschner, RN, MSN

Ilisa Stalberg, MSS, MLSP, Director

Division of Maternal and Child Health

Vermont Department of Health

June 17, 2021

We welcome this time to talk with you

There is heartening news about the lifting of COVID 19 pandemic restrictions and a return to “normal” operations. However, it makes for a confusing time, especially for those of you who continue to serve our youngest Vermonters in child care educational settings.

We will review some recent history, update you on the meaning and practice following the Governor’s Step 4 Vermont Forward plan, and discuss answers to your questions.

It may seem odd or uncomfortable to go back to our normal practices after all these months of being rigorous in our practices for protecting our children and staff and families against COVID 19.

Please refer to vermont.gov for complete guidance and additional details. Education and health care retain specialized guidance.

Note: All dates are subject to change.

At this time, Education, Health Care, Sports/Organized Sports and Youth Summer Camps will retain individualized guidance and not move to universal guidance.

STEP 1

VACCINATION PROGRESS (FIRST DOSE):
Vulnerable population substantially complete;
35–45% of all Vermonters; 45–55% of
Vermonters 16+

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

4/9 Group A Sectors:
Move to required [universal guidance](#)

CROSS STATE TRAVEL

4/9 No quarantine is required for unvaccinated visitors with a negative test within 3 days prior to arrival. Unvaccinated Vermonters must be tested within 3 days upon return to the state.

MASKS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Required when in the presence of those outside your household.

STEP 2

VACCINATION PROGRESS (FIRST DOSE):
50–60% of all Vermonters; 60–70% of
Vermonters 16+

BUSINESS OPERATIONS

5/1 Group B Sectors:
Move to required [universal guidance](#)

GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

5/1 Indoor: 1 unvaccinated person per 100 sq ft up to 150, plus any number of vaccinated people

Outdoor: 300, plus any number of vaccinated people

MASKS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

Required when in the presence of those outside your household.

STEP 3

VACCINATION PROGRESS (FIRST DOSE):
60–70% of all Vermonters; 70–85% of
Vermonters 16+

CROSS STATE TRAVEL

REVISED: Effective 5/14

6/1 No quarantine or testing requirements

GATHERINGS AND EVENTS

REVISED: Effective 5/14

6/1 Indoor: 1 unvaccinated person per 50 sq ft up to 300, plus any number of vaccinated people

Outdoor: 900, plus any number of vaccinated people

MASKS AND PHYSICAL DISTANCING

REVISED Not required if vaccinated. Required if unvaccinated.

COVID-19 Health Guidance for Child Care and Out-of-School-Time Care Guidance we followed in May 2021

Revised Sections, Effective May 1st, 2021

- Health Screenings
- Return to Work/Care Post-Vaccine
- Drop off/Pick Up
- Transportation
- Hand Hygiene
- Cleaning
- Volunteers/Visitors allowed in step 3
- Masks
- Physical Distancing and Pods



JULY 4

Business Operations

Universal guidance
encouraged for
all sectors

Gatherings and Events

No capacity
restrictions

Masks and Physical Distancing

Encouraged



VERMONT FORWARD Step 4

As of June 14, 2021, more than 80% of eligible Vermonters have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine and Governor Phil Scott has authorized the move to Step 4 of the [Vermont Forward Plan](#), lifting business, gathering, and travel related restrictions, nearly two weeks ahead of schedule.

Universal guidance encourages Vermonters to wear masks and practice social distancing if unvaccinated. Also practice good hygiene (hand washing) and be cautious about traveling.

Universal guidance is encouraged for all business sectors. Businesses are allowed to institute their own rules.

All event and gathering restrictions and requirements are lifted.

Summary of Step 4 and Masking as of June 14

Masks and Physical Distancing

All masking and physical distance mandates are lifted.

- Unvaccinated individuals seeking recommendations should reference the [Department of Health website](#).
- Masks are recommended for unvaccinated youth childcare/summer camp attendees and organizers during indoor activities this summer.
- The Federal Transit Administration still requires [masks on public transportation](#) for all riders through September 13, 2021.

Message from CDD June 15, 2021

As of June 14, 2021, Governor Phil Scott lifted all COVID-19 requirements and restrictions. You can view the [press release](#) on the Office of the Governor's website.

For child care providers and out-of-school-time care providers, this means:

- It is recommended that unvaccinated people (children over age two who are able) wear masks when inside throughout the summer.
- Child care providers will need to decide how they wish to proceed and are encouraged to have conversations with their own staff, their families/communities, and community child health professionals now that universal precautions are encouraged and a matter of personal choice.

For prevention strategies and additional resources, please see to the [Vermont Department of Health's website](#).

COVID 19 DATA UPDATE

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/vaccine/covid-19-vaccine-dashboard>

This site has on going, updated data for Vermont on such topics as numbers of cases and percent Vermonters who are vaccinated.

- As of June 14, 2021, more than 80% of eligible Vermonters have received at least the first dose of the COVID-19 vaccine
- % case positivity rate 0.7% and other data is available
- % population of children who have received at least one dose vaccine (as of June 16, 2021) :
 - > 12 – 15 year old: 55.3%
 - > 16 – 17 year old: 67.8 %

Vaccinations

- COVID-19 vaccines are **safe and effective**.
- Millions of people in the United States have received COVID-19 vaccines under the most intense safety monitoring in U.S. history.

COVID-19 vaccines are very effective at preventing serious disease, including hospitalization and death. But no vaccine is 100% effective. That means some people who are vaccinated may become infected with COVID-19. This is called a “vaccine breakthrough.” This happens with any vaccine such as measles, mumps, flu and others.

Less than 1 % of cases in VT since January 2021, have been among vaccinated Vermonters.

COVID Vaccines for Children

We are hopeful that by Fall 2021, there will be vaccine approval for children 6 – 11 years old and by January 2022, there will be approval for children under 6 years old. This will be a major step in establishing COVID 19 vaccines for all on an ongoing basis such as is the case for many other vaccines (measles, etc.)

Child Care Providers can encourage their families to get their children vaccinated. Families can talk with their health care providers about any concerns or hesitancy.

The Vermont AAP has a series of Family Forums featuring Vermont's pediatricians explaining about the COVID vaccine for children. The videos are available at:
<http://www.aapvt.org/news/aapvt-holds-family-forums-covid-19-vaccine-adolescents>

Travel

As part of Vermont's Stages 3 and 4, the restrictions for domestic travel have been lifted.

Except for [international travel](#), travel **no longer requires testing or quarantine.**

CDC recommends delaying travel until you are fully vaccinated, because travel increases your chance of getting and spreading COVID-19.

- Please note specific guidance for [international travel](#)



What does the Step 4 mean for those who serve young children?

- American Academy of Pediatrics – Vermont Chapter: -- Vaccines are the most effective tool we have to end the COVID-19 pandemic... Case rates, hospitalizations, and deaths have decreased thanks to these highly effective vaccines ... it is important to remember that young children are not yet eligible for the vaccine and so warrant special consideration.
- Families and child serving settings will make their own decisions ... but AAP – VT is recommending the following based on current COVID case rates and rates of vaccinations in Vermont:
 - Unvaccinated children over 2 years of age as well as unvaccinated adults should continue to wear masks indoors when they are around other unvaccinated people.
 - Given the low risk of transmission during outdoor activities, it is reasonable for unvaccinated children to not wear masks outside.
- <http://www.aapvt.org/news/aapvt-offers-guidance-families-children-how-navigate-summer-and-stay-healthy-and-active>

Step 4 Important Considerations

AAP- Vt Chapter: Masks have shown to be effective in preventing the spread of COVID-19 as well as the spread of other respiratory infections. Pediatric hospitalizations due to respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), influenza, and other viruses were at a record low this year even among children attending full-time childcare and school. As restrictions are loosened, many parts of the world have seen an increase in common respiratory viruses. These viruses can cause serious illness especially among the very young. Currently we are seeing an increase in pediatric hospital admissions in Vermont for respiratory illness caused by rhinovirus, a common respiratory virus.

VDH encourages child serving settings to continue procedures that promote adults and children who are sick to stay home regardless of vaccination status. These procedures are appropriate for ongoing, non-pandemic times and are designed to reduce transmission of communicable disease in general such as the common cold.

Please feel free to reach out to your child's medical provider with any questions or concerns.

SUMMARY

Unvaccinated children over 2 years of age as well as unvaccinated adults are encouraged to wear masks indoors.

There is no formal guidance or Executive Orders due to the Step 4 lifting of restrictions. This means the CDD guidance has been discontinued.

Child Care providers are encouraged to create any ongoing practices or policies that use best practice and are in compliance with CDD regulations and are congruent with the best practices in Caring for our Children. This process can be done in communication with their staff and families

Note that Contact Tracing will continue via the VDH and the contractor “AMTrace”



Your questions/concerns

Question: What is the transmissibility of new variants in young children?

Answer: Variants can be more transmissible in people of all ages, including children, but research indicates variants do not result in more significant disease.

So far, studies suggest that the vaccines available now will help our bodies fight against all strains of the virus that cause COVID-19. In addition, people who have two doses of the COVID 19 vaccine are more fully protected against all virus variants.

Variant reporting by county:

[COVID-19 in Communities | Vermont Department of Health \(healthvermont.gov\)](https://healthvermont.gov/covid-19-in-communities)

Your questions/concerns

Question: We have not allowed singing in our classrooms over the last year. Are there any recommendations as we move forward? Should we continue following this policy knowing that children have not been vaccinated?

Answer: In understanding how to respond to these types of specific situations, follow the key concepts of masks and distancing and good hygiene. So, in this case it would be best to continue masking and spacing. Hold practices outside as much as possible. Also encourage those who are eligible to become vaccinated.

Your questions/concerns

QUESTION: Can we require staff be vaccinated?

ANSWER: This is a question for a Human Resources office or legal adviser. Obviously it is best to support and encourage staff to be vaccinated. Staff can be directed to talk with their health care provider if they have concerns about the vaccine.

Your questions/concerns

Question: Are unvaccinated adults any higher of a risk to infants and toddlers as a vaccinated adult?

Answer: Yes, we now know that unvaccinated adults pose a higher risk of transmission to infant and toddlers than those who are fully vaccinated.

Your questions/concerns

QUESTION: Are vaccinated staff, without masks, a danger to unvaccinated children?

ANSWER: A fully vaccinated staff is a very effective measure to protect the children in your program. As per the universal guidance, fully vaccinated people do not have to wear masks.

We are still learning how well vaccines prevent you from spreading the virus that causes COVID-19 to others, even if you do not have symptoms. Early data show that vaccines help keep people with no symptoms from spreading COVID-19. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/keythingstoknow.html>

Your questions/concerns

QUESTION: Should I restrict parents/guardians from access to my child care site due to COVID 19 or vaccination status?

ANSWER: Vermont's Child Care Regulations state: 4.2 Visits and Access to Children
The program director shall ensure that parents have access to the CBCCPP, staff primarily involved with their children, and to their children without delay at any time children are in attendance and without prior approval.

So per the regulation and also per good practice, parents will need access to their children. You can ask them to follow your usual visitation policies and also your policies specific to masking.

Your questions/concerns

QUESTION: The masks have kept illnesses out of cc programs during the pandemic. Various viruses are already sneaking back in. How can we continue to encourage families to monitor their children's health and keep them home?

ANSWER: Review your existing health and prevention measure and compare with the regulations from CDD and also Caring for Our Children. This will be a good opportunity to update your regular ongoing procedures. The practices of rigorous hand washing and keeping sick children at home are some of the most effective in keeping illness at a minimum at your program.

THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU

We thank you all for your hard work and perseverance during this pandemic. We all should be proud of what we have accomplished here in Vermont.

The work of child care providers and your staff has been critical in overcoming the pandemic threat in Vermont.

You are the people who stayed open throughout this pandemic and used your skills and knowledge and creativity to help us all develop processes and techniques to keep our children safe.

Contact Us

Vermont Department of Health COVID 19

802-863-7240 **x #8**

Responding M-F 8am – 3 pm

Toll Free 800-464-4343 **x2, then x #8**

After hours urgent COVID 19 Questions: **x #7**

www.healthvermont.gov

