

INFORMATION & RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES

Updated Thursday, October 22, 2020

This document contains a summary of information and resources to help you navigate the provision of child care during the COVID-19 pandemic. It will be updated on a regular basis as new information and resources are available.

Child Care Operations During Vermont's COVID-19 Response

As of Monday, June 1, all regulated child care programs in Vermont are allowed to be open to all children, per Governor Phil Scott's May 8 announcement. The reopening process is different for every child care program. Programs need to meet updated [health and safety guidelines](#) to operate, including the ability to implement important measures to protect both early childhood educators and the children and families that attend their programs. Please be patient with your child care provider as they work to determine when and how to reopen and comply with these guidelines.

Governor Scott initially [ordered](#) all child care programs not providing care for the children of essential workers or other qualifying families to close on March 18, 2020 and remain closed through April 5, 2020 and then later through subsequent orders; child care programs were ultimately allowed to reopen starting June 1. The governor's executive order acknowledged that child care is critical to both Vermont's COVID-19 response and the state's economy. The state worked to ensure that Vermont's early care and education system and families were supported through the extended closure period and remain supported through the reopening process into the fall.

What Reopening Means for Families

It's important to remember that reopening looks different for every child care program. Some child care program staff are unable to return to work at this time due to health considerations, a lack of child care for their own children, or other challenges. This may mean that your child care program may need to adjust hours of operation, regular classroom staffing, or other operational policies and procedures.

The deputy commissioner of Vermont's Child Development Division has written [a letter](#) to families about what to expect during the reopening process, and the Vermont Department of Health has developed a number of fact sheets for families, including:

- [What families can expect from child care](#), and
- [What to know if your child gets sick](#), including when they can return to their child care program.

If you currently participate in Vermont's Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP), you should have received [this letter](#) from Vermont's Child Development Division with more information on ways you can use your financial assistance during the reopening process. You

should contact your [eligibility specialist](#) with any questions or for more information on your options.

If you do not currently participate in CCFAP and you need help paying for child care, you can contact your region's [community child care support agency](#) for more information on CCFAP and whether your family may qualify for the program. Your community child care support agency has a staff member who is a CCFAP eligibility specialist who can talk to you about the program's eligibility guidelines. These include the number of people living in your household, your family's income, and whether you are searching for work, working, or participating in a training or higher education program, specialized health needs, and other factors. The current income eligibility cap for a 4-person family is an income of \$77,256 per year.

If your child care program has closed and you are looking for child care, your local [community child care support agency](#) also has a trained child care referral specialist who can help you explore available child care options in your community.

Additional Family Resources

Vermont 2-1-1

Specialists, including trained health care professionals and child development specialists, are available to answer questions on topics such as: utility, mortgage/rent, food, unemployment assistance and resources, free or low-cost internet options, health concerns, and child development. **This is a FREE service for all Vermonters.** Dial 211 or call 802-652-4636 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week), or text your ZIP code to 898211 (Monday through Friday, 8 AM–8 PM).

Health Insurance

If you do not currently have health insurance or would like to make changes to an existing plan, visit Vermont Health Connect during Open Enrollment, which starts November 1 and ends December 15. Enrollment in Medicaid and Dr. Dynasaur continues year round. Visit Vermont Health Connect's [website](#) or call 1-855-899-9600 for more info.

WIC (Women, Infants, & Children)

Vermont's WIC program offers free food, infant formula, diapers, medications, etc. to families with young children. Visit <https://www.healthvermont.gov/family/wic> for more information about the program or to apply for help. If you already participate in WIC, the program has temporarily expanded the list of food items you are able to purchase due to shortages of certain items. You can use the WIC [mobile app](#) to check to see if items are on the newly expanded grocery list.

Food & Meal Access for Families with Young Children

You can access free meals for your children all around Vermont. Many schools and other local organizations are providing meals for all children 18 years old and under, including preschoolers and children not enrolled in school through the end of the 2020-2021 school year.

[Click here](#) for more information on free meals, as well as additional free or low-cost food options and nutrition resources available to families.

Domestic Violence Hotlines

If you feel unsafe in your home, you can contact the **Vermont Domestic Violence Hotline** for guidance and support at 1-800-228-7395 or the **National Domestic Violence Hotline** at 1-800-799-7233 or by texting LOVEIS to 22-522.

Substance Use and Recovery Support

Vermont Helplink is Vermont's alcohol and drug support center. You can connect to the center through its [website](#), its hotline 802-565-5465, or through 2-1-1.

Mental Health Resources

The Vermont Department of Mental Health has developed a set of resources for individuals and families to support you during the COVID-19 response. You can view these materials [here](#).

Prevent Child Abuse Vermont's Helpline

A resource dedicated to parents, professionals, and community members for parenting support, resources, and referrals during these stressful times. Call the helpline at 1-800-244-5373.

Parenting Support

- Psychology Today developed this [great resource](#) of quick ideas to help parents and guardians practice self-care.
- Bright Horizons created a [positive guidance toolbox](#) for parents offering ideas to address common parenting challenges.
- Huffpost published some reassuring advice in its article, [Parents: It's OK If You're Barely Getting By Right Now](#). "In this time of the coronavirus, keep your kids safe, make them feel loved, and feed them. That's all."

Public Wi-Fi

The Vermont Public Service Department has developed a new resource for community members of publicly-available wireless internet throughout Vermont. Click [here](#) for a map of public wi-fi locations.

Supporting Your Child's Development

- **Vermont Early Learning Standards for Families**
 - [The Vermont Early Learning Standards \(VELS\) for Families](#) offer a variety of resources and activities for families to engage with their child(ren) and help shape their learning and development.
- **Indoor and Outdoor Activity Ideas:**
 - [Get Outside Challenge](#). 1,000 Hours Outside provides resources to families to help encourage more outside play and exploration.

- Virtual Playdates or Storytime. Facetime, Skype, Zoom & WhatsApp can help kids connect with friends & family. Try hosting a virtual story time with grandparents or set up a quick video playdate with friends.
- Cook Together. PBS has a great catalog of [family-friendly recipes](#) that kids and their families can make together.
- Read Together. The National Association for the Education of Young Children has [a great resource for parents](#) that explains ways to read with your young child(ren) to promote early literacy and development.
- **Online Resources:**
 - [Music for Sprouts](#). Links to videos and activities with Mr. Chris and Friends
 - [LUNCH DOODLES with Mo Willems!](#) Mo Willems invites YOU into his studio every day for his LUNCH DOODLE. Learners can draw, doodle & explore new ways of writing by visiting Mo's studio virtually once a day for the next few weeks.
 - [Virtual Museum Tours](#). Museums throughout the world are offering virtual tours for those impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - [Sparkle Stories Podcast](#). A podcast for young children providing families access to over 1,300 audio stories. Their [30-day free trial](#) makes this a great resource for families during the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - [Zoo Webcams](#). *The New York Times* put together a list of zoos in the US with webcams so that you can virtually visit with animal friends.
 - [Atlanta Speech School's Pop-Up Early Learning Program](#). The school is sharing free daily toddler and preschool lessons and resources with guidance videos for families and early childhood educators.