



COVID-19: Schools and Child Care

Recommendations will change as we move through [Wisconsin's roadmap to reopen](#) using public health principles of testing, tracing, and tracking the new coronavirus to decrease COVID-19 cases and death.

K-12 Schools

On June 22, 2020, the [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction \(DPI\)](#) released [guidance for district and school leadership](#) to use as they plan for reopening schools for the upcoming fall semester. The document, [Education Forward](#), provides information for a safe, efficient, and equitable return to school, and resources for infection control and mitigation, including:

- A [School Health Services Infection Control and Mitigation Toolkit](#)
- A [Reopening School Buildings Risk Assessment Tool](#)
- [Interim COVID-19 Transportation Guidance](#)
- [Interim COVID-19 Cafeterias and Food Service Guidance](#)
- A [COVID-19 Infection Control Checklist for K-12 Schools](#)

Recommendations for Graduation Ceremonies

At this time, the Department of Health Services recommends that schools cancel or postpone all in-person ceremonies for spring and summer graduations. Public gatherings such as traditional graduation ceremonies are not advised until the state has met benchmarks articulated in [Wisconsin's roadmap to reopen](#) and the state determines that it is safe to do so.

Currently, DHS recommends that individuals avoid all public and private gatherings of any number of people that are not part of a single household or living unit. This applies to events like traditional graduations. The state will re-evaluate this recommendation on in-person public events once the state has seen a sustained downward trajectory in COVID-19. This is a rapidly changing and evolving situation, but it is unlikely that any large gatherings would be recommended throughout the summer.

Visited on 07/22/2020

Any graduation event held at this time should be virtual or non-contact, and should not physically convene groups of people together.

Some ideas to honor seniors through virtual or other alternative celebrations while ensuring public health safety include:

Holding a virtual graduation ceremony and mail diplomas to graduates.

Asking seniors to send individual videos with short messages to their graduating classmates. This, with the traditional filmed speeches by invited speakers, creates a longer film highlighting the graduates' high school experiences and provides a long-term memento.

Highlighting seniors on social media each day with special hashtags that allow for family, friends, and community members to congratulate individual students (who agree to participate) with photos and messages.

Using Main Street lights to display pictures of individual students (who agree to participate).

Securing a digital billboard and display messages directly from graduates to his or her class. Expand that to include messages from families and friends to graduates as well.

Individualized Ceremony: School leaders could visit each graduate's home, while remaining outside and at least six feet away, to congratulate and take photos of each graduate in their cap and gown and holding their diploma. This type of recognition may need to be conducted over the course of several days depending on the class size.

Gatherings of students and families in drive-through ceremonies, even in separate cars, may result in situations where ensuring adequate social distancing and protection of families and school staff is difficult. This may put students and their families at risk, particularly for students or family members with underlying risk factors that put them at risk for severe health impacts if they contract COVID-19.

However, if a school district pursues plans for a drive-through ceremony, more care and complex planning is required in attempting structured and controlled drive-through graduation ceremonies that minimize risk. Examples of drive-through ceremonies that involve minimal risk include:

Model 1: Students and their families drive up to the school wearing masks. Only the student gets out of the car to receive the diploma, the principal says the name of the student on a loud speaker, a photo or video is taken of the student more than 6 feet from school staff, and the family drives away. All of this would be done in a single-file line with support from law enforcement to ensure public safety and flow of traffic.

Model 2: All family members stay in the car. The senior is in the front seat and the principal passes the diploma through the car window and shares congratulations. Everyone wears masks. This could be held in alphabetical order, and would be done in a single-file line with support from law enforcement to ensure public safety and flow of traffic.

Visited on 07/22/2020

As school districts plan for alternatives to traditional graduation ceremonies, they should coordinate with local public health departments, local law enforcement, families, and other community members to ensure that any graduation celebration meets all expectations and requirements for social distancing or other public health protections.

Again, districts should consult with local public health departments, law enforcement, and legal counsel in planning any in-person events.

[DPI Considerations for Virtual Ceremonies During COVID-19](#)

Interim Guidance for Summer Camps

At this time, DHS recommends that congregate activities for children that are considered educational or enrichment programs, including residential summer camps, be postponed or canceled. This guidance does not apply to licensed day camps regulated by the Department of Children and Families. COVID-19 continues to circulate throughout Wisconsin, and the state has not yet met the criteria for safely conducting these programs. Physical distancing and proper hygiene by children in these settings is extremely difficult to enforce. Summer camps and enrichment programs should follow applicable state, local, and tribal health recommendations. We urge programs to work with their local public health departments, who can help assess the community mitigation strategies needed based on the level of COVID-19 transmission in your area, the capacities of your local public health department and health care systems, and other relevant factors. This guidance does not apply to day cares for the children of essential workers.

This is a rapidly evolving situation, so please continue to monitor DHS guidelines, as they may change based upon new scientific information and epidemiological data.

With schools across the state closed and summer quickly approaching, many parents and guardians rely on summer programs for the care of their children. This guidance is intended to assist camp directors and administrators in making the safest decisions possible regarding child care programs and summer day camps during the COVID-19 pandemic. It outlines best practices and considerations for resuming operations when it is considered safe to do so. These recommendations are based on what is currently known and understood regarding COVID-19.

Until we reduce the transmission of COVID-19 and meet the Wisconsin gating criteria and core responsibilities in the Badger Bounce Back plan, DHS recommends that summer camps and youth programs that are considered educational or for enrichment be postponed or canceled. Resuming educational and enrichment programs for youth will need to be a gradual process, starting once the state experiences a sustained downward trend in COVID-19 cases. We will need to continue efforts to prevent future outbreaks, monitor for resurgence of the virus, and take appropriate steps if we see increases in virus transmission.

Overview of the Three Phases of the Badger Bounce Back Plan

Action
Safer at Home
Phase One: When all Gating Criteria and Core Responsibilities are Met
Phase Two: Based on Re-Evaluation of Criteria and Core Responsibilities
Phase Three: Based on Re-Evaluation of Criteria and Core Responsibilities
Open K-12 Summer Educational and Enrichment Programs
No
Yes*
Yes*
Yes
Open Day Cares
Yes, but limits on capacity
Yes*
Yes*
Yes

*People over age 60, including employees, and those who are medically vulnerable should continue to shelter in place. Online education and remote work encouraged wherever possible.

This guidance does not apply to day cares for the children of essential workers. As such, day camps and youth programs that are licensed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) or attached to a licensed program, should continue to operate their programs following other applicable guidelines issued by the state.

Decisions to open camps for education and enrichment depend on our ability to quickly track, test, and trace cases of COVID-19 in our communities, in order to limit its spread. All decisions

Visited on 07/22/2020

about opening summer camps should be made in collaboration with state and local and/or tribal health authorities, who can help assess the community mitigation strategies needed based on the level of COVID-19 transmission in your area, the capacities of your local public health department and health care systems, and other relevant factors.

Should you consider opening summer camp?

Below are high-level questions that you should consider before deciding whether to open your camp or youth program this summer.

Is the program or camp in a community no longer requiring significant mitigation?

Will opening be in compliance with state and local orders?

Will the program or camp limit attendance to children and staff who live in the local area?

Will the program or camp be ready to protect children and staff at higher risk for severe illness?

If you answered "no" to any of these questions, we recommend that you **not** open until you can answer "yes" to all of them.

Recommendations for planning and preparedness

Visited on 07/22/2020

Maintain a strong relationship with local health authorities and emergency response managers, and monitor resources available from the CDC to ensure you have the most up-to-date information.

Keep families and staff informed of all health and safety-related efforts at camp to alleviate concerns. Parents and guardians and staff should be provided with the name and contact information of an appropriate camp professional who can answer any questions that may arise.

Augment pre-camp agreements with parents and guardians and staff to tactfully state that the camp reserves the right not to admit people who pose a communicable disease risk to others. Those with respiratory illness should not come to camp until they are healthy.

Consider offering a delayed start and/or the option of attending a different camp session once they are recovered.

Consider offering virtual learning options to children who are unable to attend camp due to illness. For example:

Challenge students to spend 20–60 minutes per day reading at home, especially as libraries begin providing curbside pick-up of books.

Check to see if schools in your area have expanded Wi-Fi signals to cover their parking lots, which allows families to drive up and download materials without having to leave their cars. If so, consider delivering instructional packets online.

Remember that activities offered should not require venturing far outside of the home or backyard.

Consider implementing generous cancellation and refund policies for campers whose plans change due to illness, are at high-risk for complications, or whose families have suffered financial hardship as a result of COVID-19.

Anticipate the need for parents and guardians to take a sick child home. In the event that campers may need to be sent home early, consider providing access to insurance that covers the cost of camp interruption.

Monitor staff absenteeism and have a roster of trained back-up staff.

Provide staff from higher transmission areas telework and other options as feasible to eliminate travel to camps and youth programs in lower transmission areas and vice versa.

Recommendations for physical distancing

Visited on 07/22/2020

All campers and staff should maintain 6 feet of physical distance between themselves and others at all times.

Space seating and/or desks to at least 6 feet apart.

Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children).

Restrict mixing between groups.

Consider staggering meal times and modifying dining rooms to provide adequate physical distancing. When possible, encourage campers and staff to eat meals outside in smaller groups.

Space out seating and bedding to at least 6 feet apart. Position beds head to toe to maintain adequate physical distancing.

Cancel all field trips, inter-group events, and extracurricular activities where physical distancing cannot be maintained.

Restrict nonessential visitors and volunteers.

Limit attendance to those who live in the local area.

Consider holding as many activities as possible outdoors. Create field games or other outdoor activities that naturally lend themselves to wider spacing opportunities and promote healthy distancing. Make sure these activities are accessible to children with physical disabilities.

Close communal use spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds if possible; otherwise stagger use and disinfect in between use.

If a cafeteria or group dining room is typically used, serve meals in classrooms instead. Serve individually plated meals to limit the use of shared serving utensils.

Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations, or put in place other protocols to limit direct contact with parents and guardians, such as no-contact drop-offs, as much as possible.

Assure physical distancing of at least 6 feet between children on buses. This may require an empty seat in between each child and your operation to use more buses than normal due to transporting fewer students per bus.

Be prepared for an increased number of parents transporting their own children due to health concerns and/or parents being out of work or unemployed.

Training of staff

Train all teachers and staff in the appropriate safety actions listed in this guidance.

Consider conducting training virtually, or, if in-person, ensure that social distancing is maintained.

Recommendations for preventing spread

Handwashing and Hygiene

Teach and reinforce washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes among children and staff.

Teach and reinforce use of cloth face coverings among all staff. Face coverings are most essential in times when physical distancing is not possible. Staff should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands often. Information should be provided to all staff on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.

Practice frequent handwashing and advise children, families, and staff to avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth.

Have adequate supplies to support healthy hygiene behaviors, including soap, hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer), tissues, and no-touch trash cans.

Post signs on how to stop the spread of COVID-19 by properly washing hands, promoting everyday protective measures, and properly wearing a face covering.

[Handwashing posters available from the CDC](#)

[CDC "Stop the Spread of Germs" poster](#)

Children's Belongings

Keep each child's belongings separated and in individually labeled storage containers, cubbies, or areas, or have them take their belongings home each day to be cleaned.

Discourage children from bringing extra toys or materials from home.

Face Masks and Cloth Face Covers

Visited on 07/22/2020

Teach and reinforce use of cloth face coverings. Face coverings may be challenging for students (especially younger students) to wear in all-day settings such as daycare.

Cloth face coverings should be worn by staff and campers (particularly older campers) as feasible and are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.

Camps should make every effort to enforce social distancing for those who are unable to wear cloth face coverings.

Individuals should be frequently reminded not to touch the face covering and to wash their hands frequently.

Information should be provided to staff, students, and students' families on proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings.

Cloth face coverings should not be placed on:

- Children younger than 2 years old

- Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious

- Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance

Face masks should not be worn while engaged in physical activity or while swimming.

Drinking Fountains

Drinking fountains should not be used at this time. Children can be encouraged to bring their own water bottles from home and label them with their name. Facilities can also provide cups that are disposable or labeled with children's names.

Limit Sharing

Keep each child's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, cubbies, or areas.

Ensure adequate supplies to minimize sharing of high touch materials to the extent possible (for example, having enough art supplies to assign to individual campers), or limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of children at a time and clean and disinfect between use.

If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal.

Avoid sharing of foods and utensils.

Avoid sharing electronic devices, toys, books, and other games or learning aids.

Recommendations for screening

Visited on 07/22/2020

When possible, require a COVID-19 symptom and temperature check on all staff, volunteers, campers, and participants before they enter or re-enter camp (including before they get on buses) with the following questions:

Have you been in close contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19?

Are you experiencing a cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or sore throat?

Have you had a fever in the last 48 hours?

Have you had new loss of taste or smell?

Have you had muscle pain or chills?

Conduct temperature screening as follows:

Best practice: Camp personnel should take temperatures of employees, volunteers, campers and participants on site with a no-touch thermometer each day before they enter or re-enter camp.

Minimum: Staff, volunteers, campers and participants should take their own temperature before entering or re-entering camp daily. Normal temperature should not exceed 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit.

Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. Staff, volunteers, campers, participants and parents or guardians should know who this person is and how to contact them.

Create communication systems for staff and families for self-reporting of symptoms and notification of exposures and closures.

Direct anyone who exhibits COVID-19 symptoms (answers "yes" to any of the screening questions or who is running a fever) to leave the premises immediately and seek medical care and/or COVID-19 testing, per CDC guidelines.

Maintain the confidentiality of any staff, volunteers, campers, or participants health information.

If you learn that a staff member, volunteer, camper, or program participant has tested positive for COVID-19, consult [CDC guidelines](#) and contact your [local health department](#) to discuss the appropriate management of potentially exposed staff and community members, and to determine whether you should immediately cease in-person gatherings, close for additional cleaning, or otherwise change your protocols. Cooperate fully with any state or local health department contact tracing efforts. Your workers and their families' health may be at risk.

Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices, if feasible.

Monitor staff absenteeism and have a roster of trained back-up staff.

Monitor health clinic traffic. Nurses and other healthcare providers play an important role in monitoring health clinic traffic and the types of illnesses and symptoms among students.

Visited on 07/22/2020

Recommendations for campers, program participants, visitors, or staff who become sick

Work with camp directors, administrators, nurses and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms. Nurses and other healthcare providers should use standard and transmission-based precautions when care for sick people.

If a child becomes ill while at the facility:

Provide an isolated space for the ill child to rest while waiting for the arrival of a parent or guardian. Ensure the facility has adequate space for a child to remain isolated.

Contact the child's parent or guardian to pick them up as soon as possible.

Designate a staff person who, while wearing a cloth face covering and eye protection, should stay with the child while awaiting their parent's or guardian's arrival.

Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick home or to a healthcare facility, if necessary.

Close off areas used by the sick person and do not use before cleaning and disinfection. Wait 24 hours before you clean and disinfect. If it is not possible to wait 24 hours, wait as long as possible. Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants and keep disinfectant products away from children.

Notify local health officials, staff, and families immediately of a possible case, while maintaining all legally required confidentiality protections.

Advise sick staff members not to return until they have met CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation.

Contact your local health department to discuss the appropriate management of potentially exposed staff and community members. Work with the local health department, as necessary, to inform those who have had close contact to a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms, and to follow guidance if symptoms develop. If a person does not have symptoms, follow appropriate CDC guidance for home quarantine.

Recommendations for cleaning and disinfecting

Cleaning is physically removing dirt, debris, and sticky film by washing, wiping, and rinsing.

Disinfecting kills nearly all germs on a hard, non-porous surface when applied correctly. Prior to disinfecting, cleaning must be completed. Note: Disinfecting is different than sanitizing.

Sanitizing is the reduction of bacteria to safe levels as set by public health standards. It is required for any surface that comes in contact with food.

Visited on 07/22/2020

Discourage families from bringing materials and/or toys from home.

Disinfect the following at least daily:

Playground equipment

Door and cabinet handles

Sink handles

Clean shared objects, (for example, toys, games, or art supplies) in between uses.

Ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible by opening windows and doors, using fans, or other methods. Hire a trained HVAC technician to make any changes to your ventilation systems. Do not open windows and doors if they pose a safety or health risk (for example, allowing pollens in or exacerbating asthma symptoms) to children using the facility.

To clean and disinfect school buses, see [CDC guidance for bus transit operators](#).

Ensure safe and correct application of disinfectants, and keep products away from children.

For additional cleaning and disinfecting information see the following:

[Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting in Child Care Settings, DCF-P-5201](#)

[CDC Interim Guidelines on Cleaning and Disinfecting for Households](#)

Recommendations for food service

All food service workers should wear a face mask or cloth face covering.

When possible, identify and implement operation changes that increase employee separation in accordance with social distancing.

Frequently wash and sanitize all food contact surfaces and utensils.

Practice frequent hand washing and glove changes before and after preparing food.

Serve food using gloves or provide individual pre-plated meals, rather than buffet or family-style meal service.

Seat children at least 6 feet apart.

Consider staggering meal times and modifying dining rooms to provide adequate physical distancing. When possible, encourage campers and staff to eat meals outside in smaller groups. A camp operating with multiple groups of children may share kitchen staff, so long as the kitchen staff have no contact with the staff or campers.

Encourage staff to sit with and talk to children (from an appropriate distance of 6 feet), serving as role models and offering support and normalcy during traumatic times.

Visited on 07/22/2020

Closing camp and youth programs

Check state and local health department notices daily about transmission in the area and adjust operations accordingly.

In the event a person diagnosed with COVID-19 is determined to have been in the building and poses a risk to the community, programs may consider closing for a short time (1–2 days) for cleaning and disinfection.

If a community is deemed to need a significant amount of mitigation, camps and child care programs should close (except for those caring for the children of essential workers).

Child Care Providers

At this time, child care programs are encouraged to remain open during the COVID-19 outbreak, if able, but must operate with no more than 10 staff and fewer than 50 children present. Programs are encouraged to prioritize access to child care services for essential workers, such as first responders, health care providers, and critical infrastructure workers. Work with your local public health department for assistance.

The Wisconsin Department of Children and Families (DCF) is coordinating information and guidance on child care programs, Head Start, and 3- and 4-year-old kindergarten programs and related child care programs during the outbreak.

Child care information for essential workers.

COVID-19 and shared custody flyer.

Read Gov. Evers, Child Care Setting Restriction FAQs.

- [Read Secretary-designee Palm's Emergency Order #6, issued March 18, 2020](#)
- Read the full memo [Guidance for Child Care, Head Start, and 3- and 4-year-old Kindergarten Programs, and their Workforce](#), issued March 18, 2020
- **More can be found at: [Wisconsin Department of Children and Families COVID-19 webpage.](#)**

CDC Resources

K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs

- Interim Guidance for Administrators
- FAQs for Administrators
- Talking With Children About COVID-19
- Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations
- Checklist for Teachers, Parents, and Administrators

Institutes of Higher Education

- Interim Guidance for Administrators
- Guidance for Student Travel
- FAQs for Administrators
- Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations
- Checklist for Administrators

Last Revised: June 22, 2020

RESPONSE RESOURCES FOR WISCONSINITES —
www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/help.htm