

MEDIA RELEASE

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Contact: Emily Dunbar, Public Health Specialist, (641-) 421-9345

Health Department Provides Guidance for Childcare Centers

(Mason City) – CG Public Health recognizes the important role our childcare centers play in our response efforts. The Department and area childcare centers met today to review the latest on school closings, the impacts on childcare centers, and the long-term planning for COVID-19 infection control strategies. As the situation continues to unfold at a rapid pace, our focus will be on the next workweek; however continued collaboration between our childcare center partners will be ongoing.

“With the latest school closures, we recognize childcare options are still needed for working families, our first responders, and area businesses. Therefore, we need to develop a way to provide these services for our continued COVID-19 response,” said Brian Hanft, Director of Public Health.

The following recommendations were made in partnership with area childcare centers:

- Families who can utilize flexible work options to keep their kids at home should do so.
- Families should attempt to locate other childcare options by utilizing available family or friends that are not at increased risk for serious COVID-19 illness (older adults or have underlying health conditions.)
- The childcare centers will not be taking any new enrollments at this time.
- If you must utilize a childcare center, it is important to remember the following:
 - Only send your child if they are healthy.
 - Don't send your child to a center if they are experiencing a fever (100.4 degrees F).
- All centers will be implementing control measures to minimize community spread within their facilities by following these guidelines:
 - Checking temperatures of kids at the time of drop off and throughout the day. If your child develops a temperature or additional symptoms such as cough or shortness of breath, they will be isolated, and a parent will be notified to pick up their child.
 - Centers will conduct recurrent disinfection efforts.
 - Center staff and children will do frequent handwashing.
 - Classroom size will be limited to 25 children or less and they will not be combined unless necessary due to staffing shortages.
 - Children will be kept in the same assigned room.
 - Activities such as meals and play activities will be alternated to avoid larger gatherings of children at one time.

“The most important thing to remember is practicing basic public health infection control measures. Wash your hands, stay home when you're sick, and cover your cough with your upper arm,” states Karen Crimmings, the Disease Prevention and Health Promotion Manager.

The situation related to COVID-19 is changing rapidly. North Iowans should closely monitor our website and social media (@CGPublicHealth) for updated guidance as community spread of disease in Iowa is identified.

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