



Old Dominion Association of Church Schools

IMPORTANT UPDATE VDSS UPDATES PHASE III GUIDELINES FOR CHILDCARE

September 24, 2020

Dear ODACS Friends,

Yesterday, the Virginia Department of Social Services sent updated Phase III Guidelines to all Virginia childcare centers. The updated guidelines go into effect tomorrow, Friday, September 25. **While most of the guidelines remain unchanged, there are two significant changes that you should note.**

First Change

All group size limitations are lifted, effective September 25, 2020! This means that your daycare and preschool may resume implementation of staff/child ratios currently set forth in Virginia Code. By way of reminder, here is a table showing the change in ratios. *For our K-12 schools, this good news is especially helpful with regards to before- and after-school care!*

REDCD Staff-Child Ratios		
Age Group	COVID-19 Ratio/Room Limit	Legal Ratio, Effective 9-25
Ages 0-16 months	1:4, no more than 10 individuals per room	1:4, room limit based on square footage
Ages 16-24 months	1:5, no more than 10 individuals per room	1:5, room limit based on square footage
Ages 24-36 months	1:8, no more than 10 individuals per room	1:8, room limit based on square footage
Ages 36 months to 5 years	1:9, no more than 10 individuals per room	1:10, room limit based on square footage
Ages 5-9 years	1:9, no more than 10 individuals per room	1:20, room limit based on square footage
Ages 9-12 years	1:9, no more than 10 individuals per room	1:25, room limit based on square footage

Second Change

VDSS has updated its guidance regarding face coverings in the childcare setting. The updated guidance has two parts.

1. VDSS *strongly recommends* that children 2 years of age and older wear a face covering.
2. VDSS and DOLI (Virginia Department of Labor and Industry) *require* that staff in childcare settings wear cloth face coverings.

Other Guidance

All other Phase III guidance essentially unchanged. This includes guidance on matter such as social distancing, grouping of children, sanitation, health screening, health monitoring, handling of a confirmed positive COVID-19 case, temporary closure, etc.

Important Links

When your preschool or daycare reopens, you are still required to advise the local licensing office of VDSS as well as Child Care Aware. Following is the link for notifying Child Care Aware of your reopening.

<https://vachildcare.com/update-your-program-status/>

Note: This link has been updated from the one published earlier in the year.

Earlier this year, VDSS published a “leniency list,” enumerating items of “temporary regulatory and operational flexibility” that the Division of Licensing Programs has been authorized to exercise throughout the COVID-19 state of emergency. While many of the items on this list apply to licensed centers only, subsequent communications from VDSS have made it clear that the leniency also applies to items that are applicable to Religiously Exempt childcare centers. **Perhaps most notable of those items is the process and timeline for obtaining fingerprint background checks.** Follow this link to view the entire leniency list.

https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro_page/code_regulations/regulations/cdc_leniency_list_04142020.pdf

Onsite inspections are not being conducted during the COVID-19 state of emergency. Instead, VDSS is implementing a desk review process. Some of you may have already experienced this method of inspection. This inspection method is still applicable, and following is a link to a VDSS letter with more details.

https://www.dss.virginia.gov/files/division/licensing/cdc/intro_page/current_providers/notices/temporary_procedures_for_conducting_licensing_inspections.pdf

Sincerely,

Dan Zacharias
Executive Director