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**Guidance for CDS Services, Fall 2020**

Issued August 18, 2020

**Overview**

The variables that impact the provision of CDS services to identified infants, toddlers, and preschool-age children are complex and varied. Below is general guidance, based on the most current information, for the provision of CDS services for the beginning of the 2020-2021 academic year. As new information becomes available and as the school year progresses, updated guidance may be issued. In addition, the individual circumstances of children, families, staff and contracted providers, and preschool programs may result in situations not fully addressed by this guidance. These situations should be discussed with regional CDS site leadership to determine the best way in which to proceed.

**Part B/619 Services**

**Services for Children Attending Contracted or Community Partner Programs**

Contracted and community partner programs (special purpose private preschools, public preschools, Head Starts, and programs with which CDS has an Early Childhood Education Tuition Agreement in place) may implement COVID-related precautionary measures in a variety of ways. These may include in-person services with precautionary measures in place or a hybrid model which includes both in-person and remote services. Children who are physically attending these programs may receive in-person IEP services in those settings.

**Remote Provision of Services**

The remote provision of services may be appropriate in the following situations:

* The service provider has historically only provided services via remote methods (i.e. Presence Learning).
* The team has determined that the child has made appropriate progress via the remote provision of services.
* Remote services are provided during the remote portion of a hybrid model that a program may have implemented.
* The program does not allow outside providers to enter the facility to provide services
* The family, due to concerns regarding the health of the child or other family members, chooses not to access in-person services.

**Itinerant Services**

With regard to itinerant services, indicated above, if a child is physically attending a program, they may receive in-person services in that setting with the exception of those situations in which the remote provision of services is necessary. To reduce the risk of itinerant service providers acting as vectors of COVID transmission, every effort should be made to limit the number of programs in which the provider works in a given day. Ideally, itinerant service providers should work in no more than 2 or 3 programs each day and should ensure that precautions including, but not limited to the use of hand sanitizer and wipes between each child and program, frequent handwashing, the availability of multiple masks or face shields, and an extra set of clothing into which the provide can change if necessary. Proposed schedules to accommodate the above restrictions should be reviewed with site leadership.

**Stand-Alone Services Provided in a CDS Facility, Clinic, or Similar Setting**

Because CDC guidelines are more easily implemented in the controlled environment of one-to-one services provided in a CDS facility, clinic, or similar setting, those services should be provided in-person when possible and appropriate. Precautions must be in place to ensure that the potential for transmission is minimized when moving children to and from transportation and when moving within the CDS facility. Masks and hand sanitizer should also be made available to parents who accompany their children to these services.

**Evaluations Conducted in a CDS Facility, Clinic, or Similar Setting**

Similar to stand-alone services provided in the CDS facility, clinic or similar settings, because CDC guidelines are more easily implemented in the controlled environment of most evaluations, evaluations should be completed in-person when possible and appropriate. Precautions must also be in place to ensure that the potential for transmission in minimized when moving children to and from transportation and when moving within the CDS facility. Masks and hand sanitizer should also be made available to parents who accompany their children to these evaluations.

**CDS-Operated Preschools**

CDS-operated preschools should provide in-person services following the CDC guidelines. These include, but are not limited to, limiting the number of children present at any given time to support social distancing, the wearing of facemasks or face shields facemasks by all staff and by any child age over age 5. Please refer to the [Guidance on PPE, Toileting and Restraint and Seclusion](https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/specialed/director) issued on 8/14/2020 to review explicit use of PPE , including specific protocols for toileting and in the event of a restraint and seclusion. Additionally, CDS maintained facilities will follow the CDC guidelines around frequent cleaning and disinfection of materials and the classroom environment. Please review the health and safety considerations on the [Maine DOE’s Framework for Returning to School](https://www.maine.gov/doe/framework/part-I) issued on 7/17/2020. Staff should keep a change of clothes on-site in anticipation of a need to change clothes in the course of the school day. Precautions must also be in place to ensure that the potential for transmission in minimized when moving children to and from transportation and when moving within the CDS facility.

As mentioned, individual circumstances may not fully align with the above guidance. These situations should be discussed with site leadership to determine the best way in which to proceed.

**Part C Services**

Due to the challenges in ensuring that adequate precautionary measures are in place in a child’s natural environment, CDS Part C services, including Child Find activities, will continue to be provided remotely. Current and new information regarding COVID, its transmission, and appropriate precautionary measures for the child’s natural environment will continue to be assessed and a shift to in-person Part C services will be made when appropriate.

In-person Part C services should be considered for those families who have been unable to access remote services due to technological issues or due to other complicating factors, such as when English is not a family’s primary language. In these situations, a location in which to provide in-person services, other than the child’s natural environment, should be identified. If the parent is able to transport themselves and the child to the alternate service location, the parent should be informed of their right to receive reimbursement for the cost of transportation. If the parent is unable to provide transportation, CDS should arrange transportation on their behalf. Precautionary measures that align with CDC guidelines should be in place in these situations.