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## **Programs and Services Provided to K- 12th Grade Children In COVID Times**

There are a number of questions about why California is not allowing schools to reopen in counties with high rates of COVID-19 while at the same time child care programs and day camp programs are allowed to remain open in the same counties.

There are a number of factors that are being considered when decisions are being made regarding our children and how to keep them safe and protected from COVID-19 while providing them with a quality education.

- COVID-19 is a novel or new virus. We are learning new things about this virus and a continuous basis. We now understand children can carry the virus and transmit it to others, although their severity of illness is generally lower than adults. Some children become very ill and even die. Children 10 and younger appear to have less severe illness.
- Schools provide the most intensive environments for children including the length of time they are together, proximity to and interaction with other children and adults, and the number of people together in one location. Person to person contact appears the most common form of transmission.
- Parents or family members can opt to provide daily care for their children. Many parents have jobs and responsibilities that prevent them from providing full-time care for their children. There are children of essential workforce folks who will still be reporting to work even though schools will be closed to in person classroom teaching. Alternatives that more closely resemble family environments are needed.
- Child care programs are licensed, and both child care and day camp programs are less intensive than schools, children are served in smaller groups, there are limits to the number of persons in day camps and child care to be able to maintain physical distancing, and there are specific guidelines to minimize transmission. Each of these factors limit exposures.

Facilities of all kinds, including school campuses can be used to provide child care or day camp programs. Each of the facilities must meet strict guidelines, including those related to hygiene, cleaning, and disinfecting. Adults who supervise children in child care and day camp programs also need to meet guidelines related to face coverings, physical distance, and screening among other areas.

California is balancing many needs and risks, based on developing science, while prioritizing our children. It is a significant challenge to all stakeholders.