



School-Age Care Guidance and FAQ for 2020-21 School Year

Updated January 12, 2021

Equitable and affordable school-age child care programs are essential to support working families and provide enrichment and care for students. Over one hundred thousand students across the state rely on school-based child care programs as their trusted child care provider.

Care for school-aged children, especially those children of workers in critical sectors, will continue to be crucial for frontline workers to continue to confront the pandemic. The state will continue to work with child care providers, school-age programs, schools, and all other child care settings to prioritize this need.

[Executive Order 20-94](#) indicates that a school district or charter school that operates a hybrid or distance learning model “must provide school-aged care for Eligible Children at no cost during the time those children are not receiving instruction in the school building during regular school hours.”

The school-age care for children of critical workers is intended for extreme circumstances in which no parent or guardian is at home, as all of the parents or legal guardians in the child’s household are Tier I critical workers. If it is a two-parent household and one is not a critical worker, a school is not required to provide free school-age care to the family, but the school could choose to provide the care, if they have the capacity to do so while ensuring health and safety requirements can still be met. School districts and charter schools may also encourage parents or legal guardians of Eligible Children to not utilize the school-age care program if they have the ability to work from home.

As was required in the spring, school districts and charter schools must provide transportation for students participating in school-age care for children of critical workers, in accordance with their local student transportation requirements.

This school-age care must be provided for district or school-enrolled school-age children age 12 and under who are children of critical workers in Tier I of the state critical worker list. Children of Tier I workers only will be cared for at no cost during the typical school hours. The Tier I list of eligible children is below.

Tier I: for more details and clarification on what is included in each sector listed below, view [Appendix A](#) at the end of this document.

- Healthcare and public health
- Law enforcement, public safety and first responders
- Food and agriculture
- Judicial Branch (essential services)
- National Guard (activated under a Governor Executive Order)

- Educators in pre-K through grade 12 settings
- School staff caring for children of critical workers
- Child care and school-age care providers

During a hybrid or distance learning model when students are not receiving in-person instruction, districts and charter schools should carefully consider their local community needs related to care for children of critical workers beyond Tier I areas. Based on community workforce needs and local staffing and space considerations, school districts and charters may provide care for children of workers outside of Tier I and if capacity is limited, prioritize enrollment for these families in such programs.

Fees can be charged for care for children beyond Tier I workers or for any care provided beyond the typical school hours based on your district's current fee-based model and as capacity, staff and facilities allow given that you must follow MDH health and safety regulations. If the district has capacity to serve more than the children of Tier I workers during the school day during hybrid or distance learning models, this should be done on a sliding fee basis, and utilizing publicly available funding to help make it affordable for families. **To the extent possible, priority should be given to those most underserved families in your communities, particularly those receiving free or reduced-price meals.**

Schools are not required to provide this care during previously scheduled breaks reflected on a school-board approved calendar.

1. Can a district or charter school charge families for school-age care under a distance learning model?

Children of Tier I critical workers cannot be charged a fee during the school day. If you have enough staff, facilities and can follow MDH health and safety guidelines, you may care for children beyond Tier I following your normal fee structure.

2. How should schools verify "eligible school age children"?

School districts, charter schools and Community Education programs will determine how they choose to verify Tier I employment. This could include asking parents/guardians to provide identification, an employment badge, a security card, a letter from the employer, etc. that indicates what critical sector they work in.

[UPDATED 01/12/21]: Even if the employer produces a letter stating the employee is an essential worker, the position and work still needs to be included on the tier 1 list for eligibility to receive free school day child care.

3. Which employees are eligible to receive school-age care for their children during the school day without a fee?

Please see Appendix A at the end of this document.

4. Are preschool children of Tier I workers eligible to receive school-age care during the school day at no cost?

School-age care is available at no cost for children age 12 and under, who are district- or school-enrolled children of Tier I workers. This includes those enrolled in Voluntary Prekindergarten or School Readiness Plus.

5. If a district or school voluntarily chooses a distance learning-only model, can the district still provide school-age care to non-Tier I workers?

Yes. As long as children of Tier I workers are served first (free of charge during the school day). If the district or school has enough staff, adequate facilities and can adhere to MDH guidelines, care can be offered to school-age children of non-Tier I workers (may follow normal fee structure).

6. If a Tier I critical worker is working from home, would their children be eligible for school-age care?

School-age care for children of critical workers is intended for extreme circumstances in which no parent or guardian is at home, due to employment as a critical worker. School districts and charter schools are encouraged to provide free school-age care for children of any Tier I worker. School districts and charter schools may encourage parents or legal guardians of Eligible Children to not utilize the school-age care program if they have the ability to work from home.

7. Are school districts and charter schools required to provide school-age care available to children of Tier I essential workers who choose distance learning when the district or charter school is implementing an in-person or hybrid model?

No, a school district or charter school is not required to provide school-age care for critical workers when the school is offering in-person learning.

8. Would school-age care be offered by the district or school where the eligible student is enrolled, or can a parent/guardian choose to receive school-age care for their children at a school that is closer to where they work?

The district or school where the child is enrolled is required to serve the child. However, if an essential worker can arrange for care in a district or charter school closer to where they are employed, that is an option as well. Districts and charters may provide care for school-age children of essential workers living outside of their district if they have capacity after first serving children of critical workers enrolled in their district, but are not required to do so.

9. How are children approved for child care assistance for child care needed on distance learning or hybrid school days? Are they eligible for more authorized hours of care?

The Minnesota Department of Human Services has provided extended guidance for child care assistance. Visit [Information for Child Care Providers - Responding to COVID-19](#) to learn more.

10. Are schools required to provide this care on snow days?

No, schools are not required to provide school-age care for children of critical workers on snow days. For more information, see the [Inclement Weather Guidance for 2020-21](#).

11. [ADDED 01/12/21]: Is there time limit between when we receive a request for SAC and when we must begin services?

You must be working to ensure that nothing is preventing these critical worker from performing their duties. Districts/charters should be actively working to serve the need as soon as possible.

12. [ADDED 01/12/21]: If we're full and have new Tier 1 registrants do we need to decline service to children who are already being served?

Yes. If you are unable to provide care to a child of a Tier 1 worker because you are serving others, you may have to give notice to those who are not part of the requirement.

13. [ADDED 01/12/21]: If preK through grade 5 goes to in person learning are we required to provide care for 6 and 7th graders?

Yes. You must serve eligible children age 12 and under.

14. [ADDED 01/12/21]: If a program is full, can children of Tier 1 workers be put on a wait list?

Being full does not change the requirement or a school's obligation to fulfill it. Consider opening another classroom, serving only those you are required to serve or contracting with a child care program in your community.

15. [ADDED 01/12/21]: Are school-age care programs responsible for ensuring distance learning is taking place and supported?

A school-age child care program's primary responsibility is for the health and safety of the children being served. Staff providing care are not responsible for the learning progress of students. However, depending on local circumstance this may be an appropriate expectation. This should be discussed and agreed upon at the local level.

16. [ADDED 01/12/21]: What are the funding sources for districts to support their efforts in providing this care?

Consider the funds included in the Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) plan, public health supports for certified centers, additional supports that may be available through new federal funding and Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP) reimbursement for eligible individual children in a certified child care center.

17. [ADDED 01/12/21]: Are schools required to offer care during the two planning days as elementary schools transition to in person learning?

Schools do not need to provide school age care to children of eligible Tier 1 essential workers or meals on days when instruction is not being provided. Schools should communicate these days and the intent to provide or not provide school age care on those planning days as soon as they are scheduled.

18. [ADDED 01/12/21]: What are the requirements for providing school-age care if we are unable to find staff or due to quarantining of staff?

The district or charter are still responsible for providing free school age care for eligible children. Consider moving children to different buildings with adequate staff, which may mean serving only those you are required to serve or contracting with a child care program in your community.

Follow the MDH [COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth, and Child Care Programs \(www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf\)](https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf) to determine when a student or staff member may return to school following illness or COVID-19 testing.

19. [ADDED 01/12/21]: Are students and teachers required to wear both masks and shields?

See: [2020-2021 Planning Guide for Schools.](#)

20. [ADDED 01/12/21]: Are students and teachers still required to implement 6 feet of social distancing?

MDH has updated guidance for social distancing in the [COVID-19 Prevention Guidance for Youth and Student Programs](#) that states social distancing guidance will support a **3-foot radius** around each participant, resulting in a 6-foot total distance between any two people.

21. [ADDED 01/12/21]: What is the guidance around COVID testing?

Beginning January 4, 2021, all public schools in-person or hybrid learning must offer on-site testing to all staff that interact with students. This includes teachers, paraprofessionals, administrators, support staff, nutrition staff, bus drivers and more. The state of Minnesota will provide training and saliva test kits so that schools can conduct this testing. Training and supplies will be available to nonpublic and tribal schools operating in-person or hybrid learning who wish to test their staff, as well. A [questions and answers document](#) is available on this topic. Schools should include their school age child care and preschool, VPK, School Readiness, School Readiness Plus, and ECCE staff when requesting kits.

Appendix A: Critical Worker Definitions

Employees in the sectors below are eligible to enroll their school-age child(ren) under age of 12 in school-age care if their school is implementing a distance or hybrid learning model.

This school-age care must be provided for district or school-enrolled school-age children age 12 and under who are children of critical workers in Tier I of the state critical worker list. Children of Tier I workers only will be cared for at no cost during the typical school hours.

HEALTHCARE / PUBLIC HEALTH

- Workers, including laboratory personnel, that perform critical clinical, biomedical and other research, development, and testing needed for COVID-19 or other diseases.
- Healthcare providers including, but not limited to, physicians; dentists; psychologists; mid-level practitioners; nurses; assistants and aids; infection control and quality assurance personnel; phlebotomists; pharmacists; physical, respiratory, speech and occupational therapists and assistants; social workers; optometrists; speech pathologists; chiropractors; diagnostic and therapeutic technicians; and radiology technologists.
- Workers required for effective clinical, command, infrastructure, support service, administrative, security, and intelligence operations across the direct patient care and full healthcare and public health spectrum. Personnel examples may include, but are not limited, to accounting, administrative, admitting and discharge, engineering, accrediting, certification, licensing, credentialing, epidemiological, source plasma and blood donation, food service, environmental services, housekeeping, medical records, information technology and operational technology, nutritionists, sanitarians, etc.
 - Emergency medical services workers.
 - Prehospital workers included but not limited to urgent care workers.
 - Inpatient & hospital workers (e.g. hospitals, critical access hospitals, long-term acute care hospitals, long-term care facilities including skilled nursing facilities, inpatient hospice, ambulatory surgical centers, etc.).
 - Outpatient care workers (e.g. end-stage-renal disease practitioners and staff, Federally Qualified Health Centers, Rural Health Clinics, community mental health clinics, organ transplant/procurement centers, and other ambulatory care settings/providers, comprehensive outpatient rehabilitation facilities, etc.).
 - Home care workers (e.g. home health care, at-home hospice, home dialysis, home infusion, etc.).
 - Workers at Long-term care facilities, residential and community-based providers (e.g. Programs of All-Inclusive Care for the Elderly (PACE), Intermediate Care Facilities for Individuals with Intellectual Disabilities, Psychiatric Residential Treatment Facilities, Religious Nonmedical Health Care Institutions, etc.).
 - Workplace safety workers (i.e., workers who anticipate, recognize, evaluate, and control workplace conditions that may cause workers' illness or injury).
- Workers needed to support transportation to and from healthcare facility and provider appointments.
- Workers needed to provide laundry services, food services, reprocessing of medical equipment, and waste management.
- Workers that manage health plans, billing, and health information and who cannot work remotely.
- Workers performing cybersecurity functions at healthcare and public health facilities and who cannot work remotely.

- Workers performing security, incident management, and emergency operations functions at or on behalf of healthcare entities including healthcare coalitions, who cannot practically work remotely.
- Vendors and suppliers (e.g. imaging, pharmacy, oxygen services, durable medical equipment, etc.).
- Workers at manufacturers (including biotechnology companies and those companies that have shifted production to medical supplies), materials and parts suppliers, technicians, logistics and warehouse operators, printers, packagers, distributors of medical products and equipment (including third party logistics providers, and those who test and repair), personal protective equipment (PPE), isolation barriers, medical gases, pharmaceuticals (including materials used in radioactive drugs), dietary supplements, commercial health products, blood and blood products, vaccines, testing materials, laboratory supplies, cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting or sterilization supplies (including dispensers), sanitary goods, personal care products, pest control products, and tissue and paper towel products.
- Donors of blood, bone marrow, blood stem cell, or plasma, and the workers of the organizations that operate and manage related activities.
- Pharmacy staff, including workers necessary to maintain uninterrupted prescription, and other workers for pharmacy operations.
- Workers in retail facilities specializing in medical good and supplies.
- Public health and environmental health workers, such as:
 - Workers specializing in environmental health that focus on implementing environmental controls, sanitary and infection control interventions, healthcare facility safety and emergency preparedness planning, engineered work practices, and developing guidance and protocols for appropriate PPE to prevent COVID-19 disease transmission.
 - Public health/ community health workers (including call center workers) who conduct community-based public health functions, conducting epidemiologic surveillance and compiling, analyzing, and communicating public health information, who cannot work remotely.
- Human services providers, especially for at risk populations such as:
 - Home delivered meal providers for older adults, people with disabilities, and others with chronic health conditions.
 - Home-maker services for frail, homebound, older adults.
 - Personal assistance services providers to support activities of daily living for older adults, people with disabilities, and others with chronic health conditions who live independently in the community with supports and services.
 - Home health providers who deliver health care services for older adults, people with disabilities, and others with chronic health conditions who live independently in the community with supports and services.
 - Workers who provide human services, including but not limited to social workers, nutritionists, case managers or case workers, crisis counselors, foster care case managers, adult protective services personnel, child protective personnel, domestic violence counselors, human trafficking prevention and recovery personnel, behavior specialists, substance abuse-related counselors, and peer support counselors.
- Government entities, and contractors that work in support of local, state, federal, tribal, and territorial public health and medical mission sets, including but not limited to supporting access to healthcare and associated payment functions, conducting public health functions, providing medical care, supporting emergency management, or other services necessary for supporting the COVID-19 response.
- Workers for providers and services supporting effective telehealth.
- Mortuary service providers, such as:

- Workers performing mortuary funeral, cremation, burial, cemetery, and related services, including funeral homes, crematoriums, cemetery workers, and coffin makers.
- Workers who coordinate with other organizations to ensure the proper recovery, handling, identification, transportation, tracking, storage, and disposal of human remains and personal effects; certify cause of death; and facilitate access to mental and behavioral health services to the family members, responders, and survivors of an incident.

LAW ENFORCEMENT, PUBLIC SAFETY, AND OTHER FIRST RESPONDERS

- Public, private, and voluntary personnel (front-line and management, civilian and sworn) in emergency management, law enforcement, fire and rescue services, emergency medical services (EMS), and security, public and private hazardous material responders, air medical service providers (pilots and supporting technicians), corrections, and search and rescue personnel.
- Personnel involved in provisioning of access to emergency services, including the provisioning of real-time text, text-to-911, and dialing 911 via relay.
- Personnel that are involved in the emergency alert system (EAS) ((broadcasters, satellite radio and television, cable, and wireline video) and wireless emergency alerts (WEA).
- Workers at Independent System Operators and Regional Transmission Organizations, and Network Operations staff, engineers and technicians to manage the network or operate facilities.
- Workers at emergency communication center, public safety answering points, public safety communications centers, emergency operation centers, and 911 call centers.
- Fusion Center workers
- Workers, including contracted vendors, who maintain, manufacture, or supply equipment and services supporting law enforcement, fire, EMS, and response operations (to include electronic security and life safety security personnel).
- Workers and contracted vendors who maintain and provide services and supplies to public safety facilities, including emergency communication center, public safety answering points, public safety communications centers, emergency operation centers, fire and emergency medical services stations, police and law enforcement stations and facilities.
- Workers supporting the manufacturing, distribution, and maintenance of necessary safety equipment and uniforms for law enforcement and all public safety personnel.
- Workers supporting the operation of firearm, or ammunition product manufacturers, retailers, importers, distributors, and shooting ranges.
- Public agency workers responding to abuse and neglect of children, spouses, elders, and dependent adults.
- **[UPDATED 01/12/21]:** Workers who support weather disaster and natural hazard mitigation and prevention activities. *This includes public snow removal personnel.*
- Security staff to maintain building access control and physical security measures.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

- Workers enabling the sale of human food, animal food (includes pet food, animal feed, and raw materials and ingredients), pet supply, and beverage products at groceries, pharmacies, convenience stores, and other retail (including unattended and vending), including staff in retail customer support and information technology support necessary for on-line orders, pickup, and delivery.
- Restaurant and quick serve food operations, including dark kitchen and food prep centers, carryout, and delivery food workers.

- Food manufacturer workers and their supplier workers including those employed at food ingredient production and processing facilities; aquaculture and seafood harvesting facilities; slaughter and processing facilities for livestock, poultry, and seafood; animal food manufacturing and processing facilities; human food facilities producing by-products for animal food; industrial facilities producing coproducts for animal food; beverage production facilities; and the production of food packaging.
- Farmers, farm and ranch workers, and agribusiness support services, including workers involved in auction and sales; in food operations, including animal food, grain and oilseed storage, handling, processing, and distribution; in ingredient production, packaging, and distribution; in manufacturing, packaging, and distribution of veterinary drugs and biologics (e.g., vaccines); and in distribution and transport.
- Farmers, farm and ranch workers, and support service and supplier workers producing food supplies and other agricultural inputs for domestic consumption and export, to include those engaged in raising, cultivating, phytosanitation, harvesting, packing, storing, or distributing to storage or to market or to a transportation mode to market any agricultural or horticultural commodity for human or animal consumption.
- Workers at fuel ethanol facilities, biodiesel and renewable diesel facilities, and storage facilities.
- Workers and firms supporting the distribution of all human and animal food and beverage and ingredients used in these products, including warehouse workers, vendor-managed inventory controllers, and block chain managers.
- Workers supporting the sanitation and pest control of all human and animal food manufacturing processes and operations from wholesale to retail.
- Workers supporting greenhouses as well as the growth and distribution of plants and associated products for home gardens.
- Workers in cafeterias used to feed workers, particularly worker populations sheltered against COVID-19 and those designated as essential critical infrastructure workers.
- Workers in animal diagnostic and food testing laboratories.
- Government, private, and non-governmental organizations' workers essential for food assistance programs (including school lunch programs) and government payments.
- Workers of companies engaged in the production, storage, transport, and distribution of chemicals, drugs, biologics (e.g. vaccines), and other substances used by the human and agricultural food and agriculture industry, including seeds, pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, minerals, enrichments, equipment, and other agricultural production aids.
- Animal agriculture workers to include those employed in veterinary health (including those involved in supporting emergency veterinary or livestock services); raising, caring for and management of animals for food, as well as pets; animal production operations; livestock markets; slaughter and packing plants, manufacturers, renderers, and associated regulatory and government workforce.
- Transportation workers supporting animal agricultural industries, including movement of animal medical and reproductive supplies and materials, animal biologics (e.g., vaccines), animal drugs, animal food ingredients, animal food and bedding, live animals, and deceased animals for disposal.
- Workers who support sawmills and the manufacture and distribution of fiber and forestry products, including, but not limited to timber, paper, and other wood and fiber products, as well as manufacture and distribution of products using agricultural commodities.
- Workers engaged in the manufacture and maintenance of equipment and other infrastructure necessary for agricultural production and distribution.

JUDICIAL BRANCH (ESSENTIAL SERVICES)

- Workers supporting the operations of the judicial system, including judges, lawyers, and others providing legal assistance.

MINNESOTA NATIONAL GUARD

- Members of the Minnesota National Guard who have been activated under an Executive Order.

EDUCATORS AND SCHOOL STAFF

- Educators supporting public preK-12 schools.
- Paraprofessionals and other school staff.
- Any school staff supporting school-age care programs for children of critical workers, or supporting food service programs in schools.

CHILD CARE, SCHOOL-AGE CARE, HEAD START AND FOSTER CARE

- Child care providers and other workers in child care centers, family child care, schools, and other facilities open and providing child care
- Foster care guardians
- Teachers and other staff in Head Start programs.