



#StayStrongNC

What to Know When Looking For School-Age Child Care

**A Collection of Resources for
Parents and Families**

August 26, 2020



**NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**



Aug. 5, 2020 - Letter to NC Public School Parents and Families

Originally sent: August 5, 2020, updated to reflect actions as of August 26

Dear Parents and Families,

With school underway, many families are looking for child care options that support remote learning. The NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), which oversees licensed child care in the state, has prioritized supporting families in accessing safe child care programs that promote learning for children ages 5 to 12 who are enrolled in public schools.

- **Child Care Hotline (1-888-600-1685):** Families can call the hotline to get information about local licensed child care options for infants through children age 12. The hotline is open Monday through Friday 8AM to 5PM. Child care referral specialists will provide families with referrals to licensed child care programs that are open and have vacancies.
- **Onsite Care at Public Schools:** Public schools may choose to provide a remote learning environment for school-age children in their school buildings during the school day. Participating schools manage the enrollment process for families. Care for school-age children provided in a public school building is subject to the health and safety requirements of the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K – 12\)](#) guidance under Plan B. To find out if your school is offering onsite care, contact your school principal.
- **Onsite Care at Community Based Organizations:** In response to the pandemic, the North Carolina Child Care Commission passed emergency rules allowing public schools to contract with community-based organizations to provide care and support remote learning. Community-based organizations must meet health and safety requirements of the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K – 12\)](#) guidance under Plan B. To find out if your school has this option, contact your school principal.

We recommend that as a starting point, families call the NCDHHS child care hotline at 1-888-600-1685 to learn about options for children aged 12 or below. Questions about state policy regarding school-age child care for families impacted by remote learning, please email StrongSchoolsNC@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

Susan Gale Perry
Chief Deputy Secretary, NCDHHS



August 26, 2020 – Answering Your Questions About Child Care

What are my options for child care when school is closed, or my child is in remote learning, and I need a safe place for my child to go during the school day?

You can:

- **Call the child care referral hotline at 1-888-600-1685** to get information about licensed child care programs serving infants through children age 12. The hotline is open Monday through Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- **Ask your school if they are offering child care options during periods of remote learning:**
 - **On-site at the public school:** Public schools may choose to offer on-site care that supports remote learning in school buildings for school-age children (ages 5 to 12) who are enrolled in public schools.
 - **On-site at a community-based organizations:** Public schools may choose to contract with community-based organizations (e.g., Parks and Recreation programs, YMCAs, Boys and Girls Clubs, and other non-profits) to serve as a remote learning facility for school-age children (ages 5 to 12) who are enrolled in public schools.

Do I need to be an essential worker to send my child to a licensed child care program?

No. Licensed child care programs are available to all parents and families.

Is it safe to send my child to a school or a child care setting during the school day for remote learning?

Families are searching for child care options while they must be at work. Licensed child care programs and remote learning options are a response to help families meet needs for safe care. Public schools or community-based organizations that choose to offer child care that during remote learning must follow the health and safety guidelines in the [StrongSchoolsNC Public Health Toolkit \(K-12\)](#) under Plan B, which includes strict requirements for daily symptom screening, social distancing, face coverings for K-12 students and staff, and other health and safety protocols.

Licensed child care programs must follow the [ChildCareStrongNC health and safety guidelines](#). The health and safety guidelines require daily symptom screening, frequent hand washing, regular cleaning, and staff and children over the age of 11 wearing face coverings, among other requirements.

Is there a cost for sending my child to school-age care?

Licensed child care programs:

Yes, licensed child care programs charge tuition. Please call the child care hotline at 1-888-600-1685 for information about the child care options available. Once you are connected to a licensed child care program, they can provide more information about the cost of tuition. Families who need help paying for child care can [apply for child care subsidy](#).

Public school or remote learning facilities:

Please contact your school principal to ask whether there is a cost to send your child to a remote learning facility or public school site, and whether financial assistance or scholarships are available.



Is there a deadline for when I need to have my child enrolled in school-age care?

No, these are voluntary programs. However, spaces in child care, remote learning facilities, and public schools may fill up. The child care hotline (1-888-600-1685) will connect you to licensed child care programs. Please contact your school principal to learn more about options they may be offering.

Will transportation be offered for my child?

This will vary by location. Please contact your licensed child care program or your public school for information about whether transportation is offered to enrolled children.

Will I be informed if a staff member or another child at my child's school-age care location has tested positive for COVID-19?

Yes, if your child was identified as being a close contact (less than 6 feet distance for more than 15 minutes) to the person who tested positive for COVID-19. School principals and child care professionals are required by state law to notify the local health department about confirmed cases of COVID-19. Your local health department will find out who was a close contact to the person who tested positive for COVID-19. If a child is identified as a close contact to the person who tested positive, their family will be notified by local health departments.

Will my child have to wear a mask?

Licensed child care programs:

Children ages 5 and older at a child care program are required to [wear a face covering](#), unless their family member says the child meets an [exemption](#) to not wear a face covering. Children ages 2 to 4 are recommended to wear face coverings if they can reliably, wear, remove, and handle masks throughout the day. All staff and adult visitors must also wear a face covering unless they are [exempt](#) from doing so.

Public school or remote learning facilities:

School-age children (ages 5 –12) who are attending a remote learning site – whether at a public school or community-based organization – are required to [wear a face covering](#), unless that child has a medical exemption, is eating, or is engaged in a physical activity. All staff and adult visitors must also wear a face covering unless they are [exempt](#) from doing so.

Will my child get a meal or snack at their school-age care location?

Licensed child care programs:

Yes. Licensed child care programs provide meals to children.

Public school or remote learning facilities:

Remote learning facilities and public school sites are strongly encouraged to provide students with meals. Please contact your school principal to find out whether meals will be provided at remote learning facilities or public school sites.

Can I pack a meal or snack for my child to take with them?

Please check with the school-age care location for more information about whether outside food is allowed on site.



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**If you need child care for school-age children, call
1-888-600-1685 to be connected with options.**

In partnership with NC's Child Care Resource and Referral system, representatives are available to assist weekdays between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. EST. Care options are also available for children from infants through age 12.

When you call the hotline, child care referral specialists will provide referrals to licensed child care programs that are open and have vacancies for the age of the child(ren) for whom care is being requested.

Availability of child care varies from community to community.

Call: 1-888-600-1685



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