

**Northwest Michigan Community Action Agency**

**Center Based Temporary Closures Guidance**

**Policy:** Centers will remain open, whenever possible, for any number of children. To maintain consistency for children and families, every effort will be made to make up closed school days within the same week of a closure.

**Closure Definitions:**

Closure means a classroom is closed completely for in person services.

**Center Closure Determinations:**

* LARA ratio and group size requirements must be maintained at all times. Refer to the Volunteer Substitute Procedure. In the event of staff absences:
  + Call substitutes for availability.
  + Reach out to parents/volunteers for volunteer availability.
  + Call Site Supervisor and Education Coach for classroom assistance.
* Ensure the availability of food for snacks and meals.
* Classrooms located in public-school buildings will follow the most stringent protocol, between that of their classroom building and NMCAA policies and procedures.
* All closings should be discussed with the Site Supervisor and Education Coach prior to taking place.

• When all options have been explored, if licensing ratios cannot be sustained, the Site Supervisor/Education Coach will make a closure determination and educational opportunities will be offered.

**Reporting to the Center During Closures:**

Staff may have an option to work in the center or from home during a closure, after consulting with their supervisor, or may choose to take a partial or full day off.

**Classroom Closure and Attendance Tracking Guidance:**

* When a classroom closure occurs:
  + Classroom staff will mark the classroom as “Closed” in ChildPlus and will add a classroom closure note as follows:
    - on desktop choose “Entry Express,” then “Attendance”
    - choose your site and classroom
    - select date on calendar
    - once classroom attendance is up on screen, choose “Classroom Status” and select “Closed”
    - then select “Classroom Notes” and enter the reason for the closure
    - An additional note will be added that educational opportunities were offered (ex// “educational opportunities offered”).
    - this process will allow us to run report 2304 to identify classroom closures and then to click on individual classrooms to identify closure reasons.

**Educational Opportunities Procedure:**

**Staff should check in with families regarding the need for an iPad and data for program connections, early in the year, prior to classroom closures occurring.**

The program’s goal in offering children and families educational opportunities during closures is to continue children’s school readiness and to educate families on the important role they play in meeting their child’s needs through rich and intentional interactions. Expectations for providing an educational opportunity is that it is child centered, with developmentally appropriate experiences that incorporate learning objectives across all domains of development.

**Classroom closures**

Educational opportunities will be offered for straight Head Start and Blend classrooms each day of a closure, over and above the number of built in closures for the program year (3 days for non-duration classrooms, 0 days for duration), and documented on the Educational Opportunities During Closures form.

* + Each entry is reflective of what is offered for every child.
  + You do not need to fill out a form on each child in your classroom.
* The full teaching team will plan the daily educational opportunity with a designated teaching staff person that will make sure plans are delivered, implemented and documentation is completed.
* The Creative Curriculum and teacher created videos and content are to be used along with Learning Genie resources when planning an educational opportunity.
  + Utilizing the curriculum resources and goals will ensure the skills, knowledge and concepts for all domains of learning will continued to be supported.
* After 4 full days of closure, and at least weekly for extended closures, a classroom Zoom will be offered to give the children an opportunity to see their teachers and to see the children that participate.
* Educational Opportunity examples and Zoom ideas can be found at the end of the document

**Additional Family Resource Supports During Closures:**

* If a classroom closure will take place between five to 14 days, family engagement staff will reach out to each family, within the first week, to help determine immediate needs and support connections.
* If the classroom closure will take place for a period greater than 14 days, family engagement staff will connect with the classroom Lead Teacher and may lend additional support by offering activities such as a Zoom resilience session and/or posting family related resources to Learning Genie.

**Active Supervision and Safe Environments:**

Contact with families during closures is another opportunity to have meaningful conversations about the importance of active supervision, safe environments, and unintentional injuries. Strategies for the home are similar to those in the classroom. To break it down for families, start by focusing on anticipating children’s behavior (running or likes to hide), childproofing (child safety locks, medicine lock box), and supervision (pedestrian safety, appropriate care for child while parents are working).

* Six Active Supervision Strategies
  + Set Up the Environment-Ensure the area is safe. Examples-large furniture is strapped to the wall, child safety equipment is used (locks for cabinets, window wedge), adding a barrier (fence or cones) around an outdoor space, and medication is kept out of the reach of children (use a lock box).
  + Positioning Adults-Ensure young children can be seen at all times and have responsible, appropriate care when being cared for by others. Holding on to a child’s hand while in the parking lot or at the store is especially important.
  + Scan and Count-Count children often to ensure everyone is accounted for at all times when moving from one place to another.
  + Listen-Ensure young children can be heard at all times.
  + Anticipate Children’s Behavior-Be aware of children that tend to wander, hide, or run.
  + Engage and Redirect-Be aware of children’s actions and behaviors (hitting, biting, increased frustration). Direct children to other activities or events before a situation erupts.
* Tips for Talking to Families
  + Engage families using strength-based attitudes and relationship-based practices that are family-focused/child-centered, mutually respectful, and culturally responsive.
  + Sample conversation starters to talk about safety and injury prevention with families:
    - “Families often ask me how to make sure their child can explore safely. Do you have any concerns about (child’s name) safety that you would like to discuss?”
    - “Your child is now home during the day more often than in the past. Do you have any questions about how to safely prepare your home or outdoor area?”
      * If families are in need of safety products (smoke/carbon monoxide alarms, medicine lock boxes, window wedges, safety locks, etc), contact known local resources, a Family Engagement Specialist, or supervisor for assistance.
    - “Many families like using a safety checklist to help them figure out how to find and remove items from their home that could injure their child. I have a checklist. Would you like to look at it together?”
    - Visit this website for more conversation starters and tips: <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/guide-to-safety-conversations.pdf>
* Staff Resources and Webinars
  + Active Supervision Information/Resources and Home Safety Checklists on Weebly-<https://www.nmcaahs.com/active-supervision.html>
  + Training Video-<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/supporting-home-safety-during-covid-19>
  + Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center- <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>
* Family Resources and Checklists
  + Procedure Manual-Active Supervision-Family Resources Tab-<https://www.nmcaahs.com/active-supervision.html>
    - Home Safety Checklist
    - Injury Prevention Starts at Home
    - Safety and Injury Prevention
    - A Guide to Safety Conversations with Families
  + Home Safety Checklists-<https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/household-checklist.html>

**Educational Opportunities Examples:**

* An activity that the child and parent can do together that revolves around an area of development. Please remember the 600 activities that are list in the GOLD site under the Family tab. And the Home Activity calendars are a great resource for simple but important activities they can do at home with their child.
* Tape yourself reading a book and post it on Learning Genie.
* Sharing a resource with families on family wellness. Your Journey Together has great resources.
* Share with the families community resources and activities that are happening in their area that they can do together as a family
* Deliver activity bags for the family to have resources at home and then provide examples of activities they can do with their child
* Offer a group zoom meeting for those families that are interested. It is a great way for the children to stay connected to their friends and you as teaching staff.
* Record yourself doing a science experiment and share it on Learning Genie.
* Share a simple recipe with the families that they can prepare together.
* Sing songs on Learning Genie – children love to hear you sing and they love to hear a familiar song that they sing with their friends
* Videotape your animal at your house and read a book about that animal.
* Engage families on an at home shape hunt.
* Take a picture of self somewhere in the town and have your families guess where you are.

**Supporting Social and Emotional Needs:**

* **Mental Health Referrals** should still be made, as appropriate.
* **Feelings**- Consider spending time on feelings, feelings charts and what our bodies feel when we are angry, sad, happy, excited, frustrated, shy, etc.
* **E deca** or e deca Clinical can be completed by parents, but Teachers cannot complete an e deca because the children are not physically with them to observe.
  + Teachers can work with parents on the individualized e deca parent strategies and planning reports, which includes Conscious Discipline strategies. There are also available parent/family resources within the help tab.
  + Refer to the DECA Program Use during COVID-19 & Update on Enhancement for Collecting Parent Ratings.
* **Your Journey Together** activities can still be completed with families as a group or individualized with them.
  + Within the coach portal and the Devereux Center for Resilient Children there are video clips and recorded webinars.
* **Mind Yeti** - Practicing moments of mindfulness calms our bodies and brains, improves our health and relationships, decreases stress and builds resilience.
  + You can request to access our agency membership and even do Mind Yeti remotely with children. Parents can access some free sessions and short clips - <https://www.mindyeti.com/v2/s/>

**Zoom Group Gathering Ideas and Guidance:**

These gatherings are so valuable for the children to still see each other and stay connected to their teachers. Below are reminders of the different activities that you can do during a zoom meeting with all the children.

Zoom meeting points to consider

* Make it interactive
* Use visuals
* Make it a predictable routine
* Send families a reminder with what children will need to bring
* Do circle time activities your children loved at school but on video

Virtual Zoom Large Group Opportunities

* Message of the day or morning message
* Question of the day - read the questions have students answer with thumbs up or thumbs down
* Sing songs or nursery rhymes
* Sing fingerplays with puppets - make DIY puppets with clip art and popsicle sticks
* Read a book
* Retell a book with character cards
* Use puppets with books or songs

Movement

* Dance party
* Digital Musical Chairs - play music, dance in your chair, and freeze when the music stops. You model writing a letter, number or shape then they write it on their dry erase board or paper. Dance and repeat.
* Playdough Disco song

Games

These are great activities that you will be modeling for parents that they can do during the week with all their children!

* Syllable games - show a card or object and clap the syllables. You can use most printable syllable games.
* Rhyming games - show a card or object and say words that rhyme with it. You can use most printable rhyme games.
* Name Games or Name songs using Name cards - Hickey, Picky, Bumblebee Can you say you Name for Me? Or Who took the Cookie from the Cookie Jar
* Sensory tub - hide letters, numbers or shapes in a mini sensory tub. Pick one and students identify it.
* Mystery bag - put objects or cards in a bag. Give clues to what it is and students guess what it could be. Try this with vehicles, farm animals or other themes.
* Mystery letter - play just like mystery bag but give clues about what letter it is. Ex: it makes the /t/ sounds, Tyler has this letter in his name, turtle begins with this letter, etc.
* Scavenger hunts inside the home-colors, shapes, letters; scavenger hunt outside looking for things found in nature

Fine Motor Activities - You model first then they try it in their journal or on paper.

* Draw various types of line - straight, curvy, zig zags, spiral
* Write a letter
* Write name or words

Challenge the children

* Give students a fun challenge to do after the video meeting (aka fun homework)
* Children/family can take photo and post it or if it is a project then they can bring it to the next Zoom
* You can show an example of the challenge activity
* Make it simple using materials your students have at home so it’s not overwhelming for families
* Connect it to a book or your study

Challenge ideas

* Playdough challenges - sculpt a monster, your name, a tree or shapes, etc. have the children copy
* Building challenges - build with materials they can find in the home and have them copy
* Art challenges - draw a rainbow, toys, how you feel, letters, make a sticker picture, cutting collage
* Cooking challenge - cook a yummy treat or make a trail mix, etc.
* Hunts - go on a letter, shape, number, nature, sound or color hunt. Bring something you find to the next meeting.
* Literacy challenge - make a card for a family member, make a book, rainbow write your name, letter, cut letters from magazines/ads
* Math challenge - make a counting book, make a shape book, count all the \_\_\_\_ in your house (ex. shoes) write numbers to 10 or 20, or measure everyone in your family

More Activities

* Make patterns - children can call out what is next and make the pattern
* Class graph or survey - make a class graph just like you do at school. Connect it to a book.
* Learning show and tell - do show and tell but tie it to a learning object like bring something that is red, bring something that starts with the letter P, bring something you can recycle
* What’s missing - show a tray of items, cover it with a cloth while students close their eyes, take one of them off the tray and children guess what is missing
* Make things with playdough - you model it, they try it and show the camera (balls snakes, shapes, etc.)
* Simple directed drawings
* Count and move - rote count and move as you count: clap, tap, twist, jump, shoulder raises.
* Animal walks - show an animal card or say an animal and students move like that animal

Fun stuff

* Have a spirit or dress up day. Try a PJ day, super hero day, sports day, bring a friend or stuffed animal, crazy hair day, hat day, etc.
* Guests! Have a special person come to the zoom meeting like a grandma, sibling, pet, etc.
* Celebrate! Show your children you can still celebrate even though we are apart

**Isolation periods only occur in extreme circumstances. If isolation needs to occur:**

**Staff needing to isolate will choose from the following options, and will check in with their supervisor for approval of their isolation plan:**

* Use sick/personal and/or vacation time for the isolation period.
* Take time off without paid leave.
* With supervisor approval, work from home for a limited number of hours to complete tasks such as documentation, lesson planning, parent communications, online trainings, Zoom interviews, etc.
  + This option will be based on workload responsibilities and may not be available for the entire isolation period.
  + Those staff members approved to work from home, will enter planned work activities in their Outlook Calendar for review by their direct supervisor.

The above options may be used in conjunction with one another.

**Marking classroom closures and attendance for children absent due to isolation in ChildPlus**

* When a child is absent due to isolation (whether it is a partial classroom isolation or a single child absence), their absence reason in ChildPlus will be, “isolation.”

**References:**

**Office of Head Start (OHS) Expectations for Head Start Programs in Program Year (PY) 2021–2022 (ACF-PI-HS-21-04)**

Given their increased capacity to conduct virtual and remote services, programs may establish policies and procedures for temporary, weather-related virtual and remote services.  
**General Disaster Recovery Flexibilities (ACF-IM-HS-19-01)** **Program Options and Hours of Program Operations**  
In the event of a disaster, OHS will, for the remainder of the school year, allow any grantee in or near the affected area to serve impacted or displaced children in any program option or options without obtaining advance approval. This applies to a conversion of a program segment, such as a center, to another program option so programs can accommodate as many children as possible. This time-limited exception to required procedures for obtaining OHS permission to convert services to a different program option as a "change to the scope or objectives of a program" under 45 CFR §75.308(c)(1)(i) is based on the need for programs to act quickly in response to a large-scale and widespread emergency situation in order to ensure children's safety and well-being. Also for the remainder of the current school year, significantly affected programs may add or reduce hours or days of program operations without obtaining prior approval as long as the changes can be justified. Finding creative ways to reach out and serve these families is encouraged.

Grantees are required to notify their Regional Office of the actions taken as soon as it is practical using the Head Start Enterprise System (HSES) correspondence.

4-23 P:\Head Start Files\ADMIN\Procedure Manual\Licensing\Center Based Temporary Closures Guidance