

[\*\*PRESS RELEASE\*\*](#)

## **GOVERNOR PHIL SCOTT ORDERS IMPLEMENTATION OF CHILD CARE SYSTEM FOR PERSONNEL ESSENTIAL TO COVID-19 RESPONSE - CHILDCARE CENTERS CLOSED; URGED TO PROVIDE CARE FOR CHILDREN OF VERMONTERS RESPONDING TO CRISIS**

**17 MARCH 2020**

Montpelier, Vt. – Governor Phil Scott today issued a directive and announced additional guidance for preK-12 schools and childcare centers in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Governor directed childcare centers across the state to close normal operations but encourages continued operation exclusively where needed to provide childcare services for workers who are essential to Vermont's ongoing effort in community mitigation of COVID-19.

To support those most critical to Vermont's ongoing COVID-19 response, the Governor has ordered schools to provide childcare for "essential persons" working in response to the crisis. District by district information will be available as those local plans are finalized.

"Teachers, childcare providers and school support staff are going to be as critical to our response as our doctors, nurses and healthcare support staff," said Governor Phil Scott. "That's why, even as we ask the public to step back to help slow the spread of this virus, we are asking others, including our educators and child care providers, to step in and provide a critical service so those who are on the frontlines of our response can continue to care for the sick, protect the public and manage this evolving challenge. I am incredibly proud of the selflessness of these public servants at this time of need."

Essential persons are defined as:

- Providers of healthcare including, but not limited to, workers at clinics, hospitals, Federally Qualified Health Centers (FQHCs), nursing homes, long-term care and post-acute care facilities, respite houses, VNAs, designated agencies and emergency medical services;
- Criminal justice personnel including those in law enforcement, courts, and correctional services;
- Public health employees;
- Firefighters;
- Vermont National Guard personnel called to duty for this response;
- Other first responders and state employees determined to be essential for response to this crisis under the State Emergency Operations Center; and
- Staff and providers of childcare and education services (including custodial and kitchen staff and other support staff) for children of other “essential persons.”

The definition of essential persons may evolve as needed to respond to the crisis.

This new guidance outlines the protocols educators and childcare providers should follow as they develop plans to care for children of “essential persons.” It also addresses facility and class/group size limits, hygiene and cleaning protocols, social distance practices, as well as communications and plans for emergency notifications.

The Governor’s directive provides for continuity of funding for schools and providers during the period of school dismissal and closure to help preserve these important services for Vermonters post-response. It also directs the Agency of Human Services and the Agency of Education to work with childcare providers to identify

and address funding gaps in order to allow for these emergency services for children of “essential persons.”

“This is a rapidly evolving situation and we need our educators and childcare providers to be flexible and creative in their approach, and we’ll do everything we can to support them. At the same time, we need all Vermonters to be patient and supportive of their efforts,” continued Scott. “How each district and region meets these guidelines may look very different depending on where you live, and that is ok. We must work together to meet the challenges we face today and in the days ahead.”

### **For Schools & Childcare Providers with Questions**

Schools and childcare providers should direct questions to the agencies noted in the guidance.

### **For Parents with Questions**

Parents need to know that schools and childcare providers will communicate directly to you regarding locations, hours of operation and eligibility. We ask for your patience as providers and educators work diligently to establish service for children of those essential to the response.

### **For Additional Details**

For additional details, [read the full guidance document here](#) and Governor Scott's [gubernatorial directive here](#).

MEDIA NOTE: Governor Scott and other state officials will host a media availability tomorrow (Wednesday, March 18) to provide an update on overall response and answer questions. To encourage social distancing a call-in option will be available and strongly encouraged. Details to follow.