

Press release - 613/07/2020

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Regular operations of child care in the pandemic

Family Minister Stamp: Return to regular operations on 17 August, pending developments in the pandemic

The Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration has issued the following statement:

North Rhine-Westphalia is continuing its gradual, responsible course with regard to child care. As of 17 August, regular operations in child care will resume and will be subject to the conditions induced by the pandemic. All children can return to their child care or day care facility in the contractually agreed scope, under constant supervision of the pandemic, the needs of the children, the interests of the employees, and the needs of the families.

Says Family Minister Joachim Stamp, "Child care employees and the families have performed an unimaginable feat over the past months. I am deeply grateful for the dedication and flexibility of all parties involved. It was always clear to me that the safety of everyone, including day care and child care workers and staff, the children and the parents, must be ensured, and that every step toward reopening must be carefully considered. After discussing the matter with everyone involved, we feel we can responsibly commence normal operations. This will occur on 17 August, pending further developments in the pandemic. One thing is clear: this will be regular operation during the pandemic."

Depending on the developments in the pandemic, the recommendations from the RKI and further scientific and empirical insight, there may also be more restrictions in the future. State-wide regulations cannot be ruled out either.

This next step toward reopening is based on prior consultations with beneficiaries and municipalities, unions and paediatricians. Scientific knowledge was given due consideration, as was experience with the limited operations. In close consultation with beneficiaries and municipalities, the Ministry has agreed to not resume regular operations immediately following the summer break, but rather on 17 August.

"The state government has thus met the beneficiaries' and municipalities' wish so that all facilities, including those which are closed in the second half of the break, have enough time to prepare for the transition to regular operation," says Family Minister Joachim Stamp.

Major protective measures that apply outside of child care cannot be implemented in this area. Adherence to the distance requirement among children as well as between children and educational personnel or caretakers is not possible. Children are also not capable of wearing face masks. This is why the implementation of hygiene measures in child care remains crucial. The general safety measures that aim to prevent the spread of the virus will remain in place and are regulated separately. This concerns the distance requirement between adults, the requirement for adults to wear face masks if distance is not possible, and the guarantee of traceability of potential infection chains as well as special hygiene measures.

In order to meet employees' needs for the protection of their health and more safety with regard to the handling of the coronavirus, the state government has decided that all staff must immediately be thoroughly tested if an infection occurs on site in a child care facility. Furthermore, all child care and day care personnel can volunteer to be tested every 14 days until the autumn break. The state will pay the expenses for this. Should an infection be discovered during these tests, the health offices will take further measures.

The beneficiaries of child care facilities will receive short-term financial support so that they can fulfil the increased requirements for implementing the hygienic regulations (disinfection, hand washing, food preparation, social distancing). In particular this shall serve to finance additional non-educational assistants and alleviate the burden on beneficiaries due to unforeseeable expenses for workplace safety and hygienic equipment.

"Child care assistants take some of the strain off educational staff by performing simple, routine tasks. They are not a replacement for our educational staff, but rather provide daily support. Educational care and early childhood education are provided by our professionals," says Family Minister Stamp. The state's programme is scheduled to last until the end of the year.

Legal regulations for normal operation as of 17 August:

The legal requirements of the Eighth Social Code (SGB VIII) and Child Education Act (KiBiz) apply without limitation.

- The general safety measures that aim to inhibit the spread of SARS-CoV-2 apply and are regulated separately.
- The new personnel ordinance, which is in the final stages of negotiation, shall apply to the employment of personnel in child care facilities. It is expected to be published soon in August. The individual risk assessment as part of a workplace medical evaluation may result in limited staffing resources in the educational routine of the child care field. The personnel ordinance earmarks a temporary opening, or the possibility of deviations from existing standards, to consider this special situation.

What this means for implementation:

- The "handout for child care during limited operation in accordance with infection prevention measures due to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic" will no longer apply as of 17 August 2020.
- The regulations for the operating permit must be adhered to.
- The educational concepts intended for regular operation can be implemented again.
- Children can be cared for in the contractually agreed scope of care.
- If the minimum personnel standard in a child care facility cannot be met, the beneficiary must notify the respective state youth office of this as per § 47 SGB VIII (as is the case during regular operation) and develop solutions for the best possible maintenance of care operations. If there is no other option, this may result in limited operations.
- All adults must maintain a distance of 1.5 metres from one another. This applies to child care staff and child caretakers, child care and day care employees, parents and external parties in the event that any of these parties are together.
- A mask that covers the mouth and nose must be worn around other adults if a distance of 1.5 metres cannot be adhered to.
- Traceability of potential infection chains must remain ensured.
- Necessary hygiene measures must remain in place.

You can find extensive information and recommendations here.

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Please send any questions to the press office of the Ministry for Children, Family, Refugees and Integration, telephone 0211 837-2417.

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