

March 1, 2022 statement on **formation programming for children** from the  
*Bishop's Task Force on Schools and Children's Ministries*

All church staff and volunteers working in children's formation (infants-5th grade) are asked to review and familiarize themselves with [the Stage 3B Diocesan COVID-19 safety guidelines made effective March 1, 2022.](#)

The task force underscores the following from the above linked document:

- Wearing face masks covering nose and mouth is *strongly recommended* for all unvaccinated persons over the age of 2 in areas of [high transmission](#) as defined by the CDC. (See page 3 of Stage 3B guidelines)
- Since many children's ministry programs involve children of varied ages in a single classroom, and since verifying vaccination status may be problematic, the Task Force *strongly recommends* continuing to require masks for all indoor children's programming in areas of high transmission.

Church leadership and staff are encouraged to continue to remind volunteers and families that children with any symptoms of COVID-19 or other illness, should stay home. [The StrongSchools NC Public Health Toolkit K-12 schools](#) for children 5 years and up and the [ChildCareStrong Toolkit](#) for children under 5 years, provide detailed isolation and quarantine procedures and other best practices for COVID safety, that may prove helpful to children's ministry programming.

Guidelines and Resources from the  
*Bishop's Task Force on Schools and Children's Ministries*  
for childcare programs operating in the  
Episcopal Diocese of NC  
**EFFECTIVE MARCH 1, 2022**

[The ChildcareStrong Toolkit from the NC Department of Health and Human Services](#) has been the guiding document for this task force throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Updates to this toolkit were made on February 21st, 2022. The *Task Force for Schools and Church Programming* will continue to rely on [this toolkit](#) as the primary source for determining best practices for COVID-19 safety measures in our schools and churches. We continue to prioritize the needs of the most vulnerable among us, including children not yet eligible for vaccines, and our hardworking teachers and staff members who continue to face challenging situations as a result of the pandemic.

**School directors, Rectors, and church leadership are asked to review the [ChildcareStrong Toolkit](#) as soon as possible. **Please note these recent changes to the toolkit:****

- In areas of [high or substantial transmission](#) ([as defined by the CDC](#)), masks *should be required* for everyone 2 years of age and older, while indoors. School leadership should regularly monitor the community transmission status in their area. See page 5 of the [toolkit](#) for more details and resources regarding mask wearing.
- Updated guidance has been given on "Monitoring and Determining Exclusion for COVID-19" (page 7) and "Exclusion from Child Care" (page 9). Schools should ensure that their quarantine and isolation policies are also updated.

We recognize that the preschools and childcare programs in our Diocese serve a wide variety of childcare and developmental needs. Some programs may choose to adopt stricter safety procedures, especially those programs that offer supplemental or part-time care.

**Summary:**

In light of these updates to the ChildcareStrong Toolkit and in keeping with the Bishop's intention to allow local church leaders to customize policies and protocols suitable to their own contexts, the diocese strongly recommends (but does not require) masking for everyone two years of age and older, when your local community transmission is high or substantial ([as defined by the CDC](#)). When transmission levels decrease to moderate or low levels, some local communities may decide to adopt a more flexible masking policy that aligns with local conditions.