

Reopening Child Care Centers Following Hurricane Helene

Child care centers are eager to reopen following Hurricane Helene, and provide essential support to our families and communities. State and local public health staff are working with child care centers to help them open as quickly and safely as possible.

Child care centers work together with the NCDHHS Division of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE) to make sure they meet all licensing requirements for operation. Depending on the individual impacts to the facility from the storm, the child care center may need to contact their child care licensing consultant, and work together with DCDEE and the local health department to ensure safety during emergency operations.

The following guidance was developed by DCDEE in conjunction with the NCDHHS Division of Public Health to address emergency operation procedures related to water, loss of power and wastewater issues:

- A child care center that has no damage and did not lose power can operate under a boil water advisory. DCDEE and the local health department can provide guidance on best practices for water use under a boil water advisory. If the child care center is operating under a boil water notice, an approved emergency operations plan must be in place. Child care centers that have not had water restored or that have a boil water notice in place can submit an emergency operations plan to their child care licensing consultant. To operate safely, child care centers must provide water with gravity flow for handwashing and they must be able to prepare sanitizer and disinfectant solutions.
- If a child care center was damaged from the storm, the local health department will make a visit to assess damage and consult with DCDEE to align on a plan to safely reopen. A building inspection from the appropriate city or county authority is needed if the building was damaged and needs inspection before it can be safely reentered.
- After a flood, private wells must be assessed for damage, repaired, disinfected and tested before use to ensure the water is safe. If the child care center has a well, it will need to be disinfected and tested before it can be used again.
- If the wastewater system was damaged, an assessment from the local health department is needed, although the center can open under an emergency operations plan.
- If a child care center lost power during the storm, refrigerated food should be discarded if it did not stay cold during the power outage. If a child care center remains without a regular source of power, an alternate source would be needed before reopening. A building inspector or licensed professional would need to install an alternate source of power.

DCDEE, state and local environmental health specialists are working to make sure child care centers can get emergency operations plans submitted and reviewed promptly to reopen and serve their communities. If you have any questions, please contact your [child care licensing consultant](#) or [local health department](#).

