

## U.S. NEWS

# Day Care Poses Low Infection Risk, Study Says

By ROBBIE WHELAN

Children in day-care programs present virtually no risk of transmitting Covid-19 to adults, according to a new Yale University study of more than 57,000 U.S. child-care providers.

The study, believed to be the largest of its kind, indicated that keeping child-care centers open doesn't contribute to transmission of the disease caused by the new coronavirus, as long as they hew to sanitary guidelines like hand washing, small group sizes and staff wearing face coverings.

The research has broad implications for the U.S. economy, parents who depend on day-care centers and child-care workers. More than a third of child-care centers in the country closed between March and July, according to Child Care Aware, an advocacy group.

A June survey by the National Association for the Education of Young Children found that child-care center enrollment fell by 33% nationwide and that 70% of providers reported that parents told them they weren't comfortable sending kids back to day care.

"For parents, it might be a little bit of cold comfort, because they're worried about their particular child," said Dr. Walter Gilliam, a child psychologist at Yale and lead author of the study, published Wednesday in the journal *Pediatrics*. "But it's clear that child care doesn't pose a threat to communities."

Risk of infection for child-care professionals appears to be comparable with that for the broader population.

The Yale study sought to control for factors such as the level of infection in the community where each center was



The study indicates keeping child-care centers open doesn't contribute to transmission as long as they hew to sanitary guidelines.

located, as well as the gender, age and ethnicity of providers.

"It doesn't appear that working in child care leads to the spread of Covid-19," Dr. Gilliam said. "It is true that many child-care providers did get sick. Many of them even went to hospitals. But it was not the contact with children in child care that seems to be

the source of that infection."

The paper adds to growing research showing that young children aren't major vectors in Covid-19 transmission, said Dr. Kristin Moffitt, a physician at Boston Children's Hospital and professor of pediatrics at Harvard Medical School.

Scientists aren't sure why children under the age of 10

seem less likely to spread the virus, but some theories have included a smaller viral load in their airways, smaller fluid droplets expelled when they cough or sneeze, or simply that small children are closer to the ground and thus less likely to transmit particles to adults' airways.

Outbreaks have been more

common among high-school and college students, in part, scientists believe, because they are more independent than young children and interact more with peers.

"You would think that day cares would be hotbeds, but they're not, and this study is consistent with that," Dr. Moffitt said.