



Early Childhood Programs
Child Care Center
Parent Handbook: Covid-19 Amendment

Prepared by Heather Quinn, Director of Early Childhood Programs, in accordance with the MA Department of Public Health's COVID-19 Isolation and Exposure Guidance for Children and Staff in Child Care, K-12, Out-of-School Time (OST) and Recreational Camp/Program Settings

August 15, 2023

Introduction:

Covid-19 upended our lives in ways that we never imagined were possible. As we shift from the pandemic to the endemic phase of Covid-19, we recognize that it continues to be important to have policy in place to guide us. We are incredibly proud of the commitment our school community has made to prioritizing health and safety within our program space. This plan outlines our best efforts to increase safety within our program. Given the nature of the Covid-19, particularly with respect to transmission by asymptomatic carriers, we cannot guarantee an environment free of Covid-19. Despite all of our best efforts in following all applicable guidance, a parent, child, family member or staff member may become infected and may be unaware that they carry a virus putting others at risk of contracting Covid-19.

The decision to enroll your child in an early education and care program while Covid-19 is a part of our lives is a personal one. All families must consider the individualized needs of their child and other family members. We have received the following guidance from our licensing body, the Department of Early Education and Care:

Effective August 15, 2022, all students and staff in child care, in school in grades K-12, or participating in out-of-school time (OST) and recreational camp settings should follow the [updated isolation and exposure guidance](#) issued by the Department of Public Health (DPH), in alignment with the most recent guidance from CDC.

The information outlined in this plan reflects DPH's guidance. We will continue to evaluate and update this plan as the pandemic evolves. We welcome your feedback on our policies, as well as your thoughts on how we can increase safety within our school community.

Program Space:

Our dedicated team of teachers work diligently to honor all of the health and safety regulations while ensuring that our classrooms are joyful places where children can grow and learn together. The regulations require that each child have a minimum of 35 square feet of activity space. We are well above that number in all classrooms, ensuring that the children have ample space to explore! We have also structured our classroom schedules in a way that allows for the children to spend a large part of their day outdoors. Our new Early Childhood Center is equipped with an HVAC system that provides fresh air ventilation throughout the day.

Covid-19 Resources and Information:

We recognize that it continues to be essential for all of us to stay up-to-date on the information available on Covid-19, including symptoms, transmission and prevention. Here is a link to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website, which offers comprehensive information on the virus:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

It will also be important for us to provide the children with developmentally appropriate information and guidance. We have gathered classroom resources, collaborating with other programs and identifying new strategies to support the children in engaging in healthy practices throughout the day. Sesame Street offers wonderful resources to guide you in helping your child understand the reason for these changes.

<https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/health-emergencies/>

Health Screenings:

The following Covid-19 symptoms require exclusion from care:

- Fever (100.0° Fahrenheit or higher), chills, or shaking chills
- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Cough (not due to other known cause, such as chronic cough)
- Sore throat, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nausea, vomiting, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Headache, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Fatigue, *when in combination with other symptoms*
- Nasal congestion or runny nose (not due to other known causes, such as allergies), *when in combination with other symptoms*

If you observe symptoms in your child, please contact (508) 693-7900 ext. 280 as soon as possible.

Preventing and Responding to Infection and Illness:

Children will be monitored throughout the day for signs of illness. If a child becomes symptomatic during the course of the day, they will immediately be isolated from the group and you will be contacted to pick them up. It is important that we have up-to-date contact information for you and anyone else who is authorized to pick your child up. If your child exhibits any of the symptoms on the Covid-19 exclusion list, they may return to the program when...

- they have tested negative for Covid-19 and
- their symptoms have improved and they have been fever-free without fever-reducing medication for at least 24 hours.

Covid-19 Positive Individuals

- If your child tests positive for Covid-19, they must isolate for 5 days. If they are asymptomatic or their symptoms have improved, they can take a rapid antigen test on Day 5. If the test is negative, they can return to the program on Day 6. If the test is positive, they should continue to isolate until they have a negative test or through Day 10. Day 0 is **your child's first day of symptoms or a positive viral test**. Day 1 is the first full day after your child's symptoms developed or the test specimen was collected. Please note that in all cases children's symptoms must have improved and they must be fever-free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication) in order to return to care.

Covid-19 Exposures

In the event that a classroom experiences a Covid-19 exposure, we will notify all enrolled families and staff via Brightwheel. At this time, DPH has communicated that quarantine is no longer required nor recommended for children or staff in early education and care settings, regardless of vaccination status or where the exposure occurred. Therefore, all exposed individuals may continue to attend programming as long as they remain asymptomatic. The following practices are recommended, but not required:

- masking through Day 10 after an exposure
- a test on Day 6.

Infection Control

We implement a number of measures to prevent the spread of illness in our program, including handwashing, cleaning/disinfecting procedures and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) when appropriate. At this time, the Commonwealth is not recommending universal mask requirements in early education and care programs. We will support our educators and families in making the decision that feels like the right one for them. We will approach all members of our school community with kindness and respect as they consider the unique needs of their family and decide how to best

navigate the newest phase of the pandemic. Please talk with your child's teachers about your family's preferences.

Program Director, Heather Quinn, and Program Coordinator, Brooke Avakian, are available to answer questions and offer additional guidance. In addition, your child's teachers will contact you to share classroom-specific information.

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