

Health and Safety Guidance for Early Childhood Families

For Children Attending EarlyLearn, 3-K, and Pre-K in a Community-Based Organization

Dear Families,

This school year is like no other, and we know that you want the best for your children. We appreciate all the work you have done to make sure your child stays healthy, happy, and ready to take on the world. Our early childhood programs play such an important role in that, especially now, when the children of our city have been through so much.

There are new health and safety procedures that must be carried out to keep children and staff safe while they are attending a NYC Department of Education (DOE)-contracted early childhood program in a community-based organization. It will be different than what you may be used to, and we are here to help guide you. In this resource, you will find the latest health and safety information for your program.

Much of this guidance comes from the lessons learned from early childhood programs that safely served the children of essential workers and first responders during the spring and summer months. We used the experiences of those program leaders, as well as Federal, State and local guidance to shape our current guidance to programs so all children can learn while being healthy and safe.

One very important rule: **If your child is sick, even with mild symptoms, please keep them home.**

Remember the “Core Four”

Wash your hands



Keep 6 feet apart



Wear a face covering



Stay home when sick



Daily Health Screens

All children must complete a daily health screen before entering the building, which includes having their temperature taken and having a family member answer questions regarding exposure to anyone with COVID-19. Some programs may have a process for you to complete this screen at home. Other programs will perform this screen when you arrive.

Entry and Dismissal

Children will be dropped off and picked up at the building’s entrance. Staff members will be there to escort your child to their classroom. This is to limit the number of adults entering the building. If a family member

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does need to enter the building, they will need to complete a health screen and follow all health and safety protocols prior to being allowed into the building. Younger children may also be expected to enter through different entrances than other children or staff. This is to help prevent long wait times and large groups of people gathering together.

Staggered Arrival and Dismissal Times

Your program may have staggered arrival and dismissal times. This is to help prevent long wait times and large groups of people gathering together.

Face Coverings

All staff and children over the age of two are expected to wear a face covering. Children under the age of two should not wear one. Teaching staff will work with children who are having trouble consistently wearing the face covering. Face coverings will not be worn during meals and rest time. Children also may be allowed to remove them during outdoor activities. If your child has a medical condition that prevents them from wearing a face covering, documentation from a doctor must be given to the program for approval. **Children will not be isolated, suspended or expelled for failure to wear masks. However, families and children who routinely refuse to wear face coverings may be transitioned to remote learning.**

Face coverings include cloth-based face coverings and disposable surgical masks that cover both the mouth and nose.

- Bandanas and neck gaiters are not permitted.
- Face coverings with an exhalation valve or vent are not permitted, as exhalation valves allow unfiltered exhaled air to escape to others.
- Face coverings that completely cover or hide the face, such as ski masks, are not permitted.
- Face shields are not a substitute for face coverings.

Physical Distancing

Staff and children must maintain physical distance of six feet from others, to the greatest extent possible. Teaching staff can share with you the practices they are following in their classroom to help with this.

Hand Washing

Staff and children are expected to increase hand washing while at the program. Soap and water are the most effective way to prevent germs from spreading. When hand washing is not possible, teaching staff will have hand sanitizer available. Children will wash their hands at times such as:

- Upon entering the classroom;
- When moving from one area of the classroom to another;
- Before and after meals;
- After using the bathroom;
- When returning to the building from outside; and

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- When hands are visibly dirty.

Test and Trace

If an individual in your child's program tests positive for COVID-19, you will receive written communication on next steps for you and your family. If it was an individual in your child's classroom, or someone your child came into contact with for more than 10 minutes, then your child will likely need to quarantine for a period of time. If your child is not found to be a close contact, you will receive a communication that there was a confirmed case at the program for your awareness. You will likely not have any required next steps. Personal information will never be shared about the individual who tested positive for COVID-19.

Random Testing

Children in early childhood classrooms (EarlyLearn, 3-K for All, or Pre-K for All) are currently not required to participate in random COVID-19 testing. We strongly encourage families to get COVID-19 testing regularly over the course of the year. DOE students in grades 3-K through 12 receive priority testing at 22 Health and Hospitals (H+H) testing sites across the City. DOE students are not required to bring a student ID or proof of enrollment. Parents and guardians of students are encouraged to bring their insurance card, but with or without an insurance card, there is no cost for students to get tested. Please see the [COVID-19 Testing for Students and Staff](#) page for a list of the 22 priority sites and additional details.

Isolation Area

Every program will have a designated isolation room/area for use in the event that a child becomes ill during the day. If your child is taken to the isolation room/area, they will be supervised at all times. You will be contacted immediately and asked to pick up your child.

Maintenance and Cleaning

All spaces used by the programs will be cleaned throughout the day and disinfected each night, with special attention to high-touch areas.

Ventilation

Programs are expected to have at least one of the following in each primary classroom serving children:

- At least one window that can be opened;
- A fan that delivers air to a space;
- A fan that forces out stale indoor air so it can be replaced by fresh air; or
- A unit ventilator that circulates conditioned air to desired spaces.

Food Service

DOE Community Meals locations (schools.nyc.gov/freemeals) are open for grab-and-go meals between 3:00-5:00pm on school days only. All community members are welcome.

October 2020

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Remote Learning Devices

As a reminder, if your child needs a device for remote learning, you should fill out the [Remote Learning Device Request Form](#) or call the help desk for assistance at 718-935-5100. If you do not know your child's OSIS number, you should enter all nines (9s) in the OSIS number box to complete the form. Students who live in temporary housing or who do not have internet access are first priority to receive a device.

Should you have questions about any information shared here, please reach out to your child's program leader for additional information. If your child attends a district school or Pre-K Center please check [here](#) for the **School Re-opening 2020-2021 Family Guide**. As always, New Yorkers are encouraged to get tested if they are concerned about any exposure to the virus.

In partnership,

The Division of Early Childhood Education
NYC Department of Education