

## **COVID-19 Parent Handbook Addendum August 2021**

To prevent the spread of COVID-19, we need to operate with new policies and procedures. These policies are consistent with guidance provided by Austin Public Health (APH), the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS), and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). They have been vetted by UT's Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS), UT's Occupational Health Program (OHP), Dell Medical School and our AACNS Health Officer. **These policies are effective immediately and will remain in place until further notice.**

### **Attendance**

In an effort to keep our community safe, we ask all Co-op members and staff to observe recommended practices by local, national and international health organizations that reduce the risk of transmission of Covid-19. Whenever your family is out in public, please follow all health and safety protocols recommended by APH and the CDC (e.g., avoiding large gatherings, practicing physical distance, wearing face masks, washing hands frequently, and staying home when advised).

It is required that all adults who work in the classroom be fully vaccinated against Covid 19. Children must be up to date on all required immunizations set by the state of Texas Department of State Health Services. Please provide required documentation prior to enrollment.

### **Tuition Payments and Building Fees**

In the event that we aren't able to open due to renewed health concerns, you may choose to withdraw and receive a refund for the building fee and first installment of tuition. Normally, tuition and building fees are not refundable unless approved by the AACNS Board of Directors.

### **Closure**

Decisions about program closure will be made in collaboration with teachers and the Board. We will consider city, county, and state orders, city and state mandates for child care programs, child care licensing regulations, and information from Austin Public Health, Texas Department of State Health Services, and the CDC, and our local medical consultants. Tuition payments will not be refunded for emergency closures.

### **Dual Enrollment**

As per guidance from Austin Public Health, children may not attend our program and another early learning program simultaneously if Austin is Stage 3 or higher. We do not know what health and safety procedures other programs are implementing, or how faithfully they are adhering to city/state mandates and/or licensing protocols. Dual enrollment is incongruent with licensing mandates that children be kept in stable groups that do not intermingle, and it makes us vulnerable to COVID-19 transmission across programs.

### **Face Masks**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has updated COVID-19 guidance for safe schools (selected excerpt):

- All students older than 2 years and all school staff should wear face masks at school (unless medical or developmental conditions prohibit use).

- The AAP recommends universal masking in school at this time for the following reasons:
  - protection of unvaccinated students from COVID-19 and to reduce transmission
  - continued concerns for variants that are more easily spread among children, adolescents, and adults
- An added benefit of universal masking is protection of students and staff against other respiratory illnesses that would take time away from school.

Please send several clean masks to school with your child daily. If a child comes to school without a mask, a disposable one will be provided and requested to be worn. Masks should not be reused; please wash cloth masks in hot, soapy water and dry them thoroughly before wearing them again.

### **Snacks**

Snacks will be available to children each day. They will either be prepared and served by the helping parent, or each child will bring their own snack. Teachers will determine the best procedure for their class taking into consideration age and development of the child.

Children will be seated outside, as far apart as possible during snack time to enjoy their food and time to converse with friends without their masks. As always, allergies and special diet requirements for medical conditions must be recorded on the health forms provided by the parents. Parents are asked to provide snacks for their child if they require a special diet.

### **Outside Time**

In an effort not to mix groups, outside times are limited to one class on the playground at a time. Staff will carefully monitor children for signs of heat-related discomfort. If there are heat concerns, children may be asked to remove their masks outdoors.

### **Travel**

As per Austin Public Health guidelines, after “significant” travel an unvaccinated child may return to school after a negative PCR test on the 7th day post-travel. Significant travel is intended to cover travel by public transportation (airplane, bus, etc.) anywhere and/or any visit to a theme park or similarly crowded place or event.

### **Cleaning, Sanitizing and Disinfecting**

We will maintain our routine procedures for cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting classrooms daily. Bathrooms will be cleaned and disinfected at least twice each day. Doorknobs, light switches, cabinet pulls, sink handles, chairs and cubbies will be cleaned and disinfected daily.

Hand sanitizer will be available outside of the main entrance of our building and on the playground. Everyone will use hand sanitizer or wash hands with soap and running water upon arrival. Hand sanitizer is toxic to young children if consumed. So, please help us keep it out of children’s reach.

Staff may wear aprons/smocks to prevent clothing contamination and to allow for easy changing. Should clothing become contaminated with bodily fluids, staff will change their own clothes (e.g., after comforting crying children) and/or children’s clothes (e.g., after toileting accidents) as needed.

Children will not be allowed to wear another child's extra clothes. So, families will be asked to provide at least two complete changes of clothes for us to keep at school for their children. Wet clothing will be sealed in a plastic bag to be laundered at home.

Consumption of PPE and cleaning supplies will be tracked carefully by administrative staff so they can be reordered before supplies run out.

Fresh air from open windows and fans are encouraged whenever possible.

### **Handwashing**

Children and adults will wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Adults will assist children with handwashing as needed to ensure good hygiene. Adults will wash their hands after helping children with handwashing. Posters describing proper handwashing steps will be mounted by all sinks.

All adults and children will wash hands at the following times:

- Arrival to the facility
- Before and after preparing food or drinks
- Before and after eating or handling food
- Before and after administering medication or medical ointment
- Before and after diapering
- After changing clothes
- After using the toilet or helping a child use the bathroom
- After coming in contact with bodily fluid
- After playing outdoors or in sand
- After handling garbage

### **Daily Health Assessment**

Please screen yourself and your child for signs of illness, and wash your hands and your child's hands, upon arrival.

**You should not bring your child to school if, within the past 24 hours, you, your child, or anyone in your family's home have experienced ANY of the following:**

- **Cough**
- **Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing**
- **Chills**
- **Repeated shaking with chills**
- **Muscle pain**
- **Headache**
- **Sore throat**
- **Loss of taste or smell**
- **Diarrhea**
- **Feeling feverish or a measured temperature of 99.6° F or more**
- **Being in close contact with a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19, who is waiting for COVID-19 test results, or who has symptoms of respiratory illness**

## Illness & Exclusion

Parents of children who are at increased risk of severe illness should consult with a medical provider to assess whether it is safe to send their children to school during COVID-19.

Any AACNS employee or Co-op member age 65 or older, or those with underlying health conditions, will be encouraged to talk to their healthcare provider(s) to assess their risks and determine if they should participate in AACNS activities during COVID-19.

Children, staff or helping parents with a temperature of 99.6° or above, cough, shortness of breath, and/or other symptoms of respiratory illness must remain home for at least 72 hours, even with a doctor's note and/or a non-COVID-19 diagnosis.

### **A child should be kept home for the following reasons:**

- **Fever, diarrhea, vomiting, chicken pox, contagious skin conditions, head lice, bacterial conjunctivitis, sore throat, runny nose, congestion, cough, sneezing, or difficulty breathing.**
- **A contagious illness, or a possibility of contagious illness, not listed above.**
- **Exposure to, or a possibility of exposure to someone with COVID-19 infection**
- **Symptoms that require the quiet and comfort of home.**
- **Symptoms that prevent participation in school activities.**

## Testing

Surveillance testing of individuals who do not have symptoms or a known exposure is not recommended.

### Plan for COVID-19 Symptoms During Attendance

Children and adults who are ill are expected to stay at home to protect their own health, as well as the health of others. The following procedures will be implemented should anyone (child or adult) show symptoms of COVID-19 during the school day:

- Separate anyone who exhibits COVID-19-like symptoms. Move them to a sick mat in the main office.
- Call parent to pick-up child or send staff member home.
- Close off areas used by any sick person, and do not use them until they have been cleaned. Wait 24-hours to clean or disinfect to reduce risk to individuals cleaning. If it is not possible to wait 24-hours, wait as long as possible.
  - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
  - Identify people who had close contact with ill people and keep them from mixing with others.
  - Notify licensing, local health officials, faculty/staff, and families immediately of any possible case of COVID 19, while maintaining confidentiality consistent with the ADA and other applicable federal and state privacy laws.
- Advise sick staff members or families to register for COVID-19 testing through their medical provider, Austin Public Health at [www.austintexas.gov/covid19](http://www.austintexas.gov/covid19), or UT Health – Austin (UTHA) at Dell Medical (833-882- 2737) and not to return to program until they have met CDC criteria to discontinue home isolation.

### Plan for COVID-19 Exposure

We will inform anyone who has had close contact (classroom) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and self-monitor for symptoms and to follow CDC guidance if symptoms develop. Even without symptoms, the person will be asked to follow appropriate CDC guidance for home quarantine. The person will also be advised to register for free COVID-19 testing through Austin Public Health at [www.austintexas.gov/covid19](http://www.austintexas.gov/covid19) or through UT Health – Austin (UTHA) at Dell Medical (833-882-2737). Even if testing is not recommended after screening by a healthcare provider, the person will still be asked to follow appropriate CDC guidance for home quarantine, which is for 14 days and/or as follows:

- [Adults] People who are fully vaccinated do NOT need to quarantine after contact with someone who had COVID-19 unless they have symptoms. However, fully vaccinated people should get tested 3-5 days after their exposure, even if they don't have symptoms and wear a mask indoors in public for 14 days following exposure or until their test result is negative.
- [Students] Local public health authorities make the final decisions about how long quarantine should last, based on local conditions and needs. Follow the recommendations of our local public health department if you need to quarantine. Options they will consider include stopping quarantine:
  - After day 10 without testing
  - After day 7 after receiving a negative test result (test must occur on day 5 or later).

**Mandatory Quarantine due to Household COVID-19 Exposure: Children may not be sent to school if anyone in the household has a known exposure to COVID-19 (e.g., sibling is in quarantine) until such quarantined person has completed the requisite quarantine period. Pat Sefton must be promptly notified of any such exposure. Similarly, a vaccinated adult is not eligible to serve as a Helping Parent if there is a known COVID-19 exposure in the household or if anyone in the household is in quarantine.**

### Detailed Plan for Confirmed Case of COVID-19 in Program

- Close off areas used by any sick person, and do not use them until they have been cleaned and disinfected.
- Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in affected areas.
- Contact the local health authority to report the presence of COVID-19 in the facility and request advice on re-opening procedures.
- Contact Child Care Licensing to report the presence of COVID-19 in the facility.

### Requirements for Return to Program After COVID-19 Symptoms or Diagnosis

Children and adults must meet all three of the following criteria before returning to school:

- At least 72 hours have passed since recovery (e.g., resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medications)
- Individual has improvement in respiratory symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath)
- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared

### **Other Preventative Health/Safety Measures**

All staff have completed special training, required by child care licensing, about operating during COVID-19.

Teachers will not schedule activities that invite children to bring items from home (e.g., show & tell). Other than one lovey (e.g., small stuffed animal or blanket) per child, please do not bring items from home to school.

Classes will not mix with one another. Instead, children will remain with their class at all times.

To minimize the spread of germs, classroom materials will be limited to things that can be cleaned easily (if needed) between uses. If dress-up clothes and stuffed animals are used in the classroom they must be washed between children.

Toys that children have mouthed, or that have been contaminated by body secretions/excretions, will be set aside until they are cleaned and disinfected by a person wearing gloves. They will be cleaned with soap and water, rinsed, sanitized with an EPA-registered disinfectant, rinsed again, and air-dried.

Indoors and outdoors, adults will practice physical distancing as much as possible—while maintaining appropriate supervision, guidance, and care of children.

### **Arrival & Departure**

Specific drop-off/pick-up procedures for each class will be shared with families before the start of the semester. In general, drop-off/pick-up locations are accessed by only one class daily.