



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

Prepared by Heather Quinn, Director of Early Childhood Programs, in accordance with The Department of Early Education and Care's *Covid-19 Mitigation Protocols and Guidelines for Child Care*

April 29, 2022

Introduction:

As we navigate the third year of the Covid-19 pandemic, we want to express the gratitude that we feel for the patience and understanding demonstrated by our school community. Covid-19 has upended our lives in ways that we never imagined were possible. 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 pandemic, 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. Throughout the pandemic, we have maintained a cautious approach when developing strategies to mitigate the spread of Covid-19 within our program. We recognize that, at times, this has created a hardship for families in our community. Staying home with sick children has disrupted your work schedules and Covid-19 testing has introduced a new stressor into all of your lives. It has also impacted our operations as our leadership team shifted into full-time teaching roles in order to ensure that our classrooms maintain strong staffing levels.

The information contained in this plan was developed with guidance from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), our local Boards of Health, and our Health Care Consultant. Early Education and Care programs now have access to a comprehensive testing program that is designed to enable children to stay in care and staff to continue providing care. Our plan for the implementation of the testing options is included in this Amendment.

It is essential that our school community continue to support one another as we navigate the Covid-19 pandemic together. 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.

Enrollment:

We are currently operating three classrooms:

Oysters: 15 months to 3 years-old

Quahogs: 2.9 to 5 years-old

Lobsters: 2.9 to 5 years-old

The ratio of teachers to children in Oysters is 3:9 and the ratio in Lobsters and Quahogs is 3:16. This ratio is above what is required by our licensing body, allowing us to feel confident that we are able to honor all of the health and safety protocols that we have in place. We maintain stable groups of children with consistent teachers. When suitable to the children's ages and developmental level, siblings are enrolled in the same classroom.

Program Space:

Our dedicated team of teachers has worked diligently to transform our program space to honor all of the suggested health and safety protocols 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.

Drop-off/Pick-up:

Oysters: Families will enter through the building's main entrance. You will drop your child off and pick your child up at the classroom's internal door. The entrance to the classroom is glass so teachers will be able to see that you have arrived.

Quahogs: Families will enter through the building's main entrance. You will drop your child off and pick your child up at the classroom's internal door. The entrance to the classroom is glass so teachers will be able to see that you have arrived.

Lobsters: Families will walk down the path that runs along the side of the building that faces our old building. You will enter through the playground gate and drop your child off on the playground or on the Lobsters porch if there is inclement weather.

All families will receive 2 key cards that will allow access to the front entrance of the building between 8:00 – 9:30 am and 3:30 – 5:00 pm. If you arrive outside of those hours, you will need to be buzzed in by Robin or another staff member. Please be sure to keep track of your key cards to ensure the safety of our program space.

Hours of Operation:

Our program hours are 8:00 – 4:30. Late pick-up (4:30 – 5:00) is also be available for a fee of \$5.00 per day with prior written contractual agreement.

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:

All families are required to participate in a daily health screening. It is essential that you self-screen your child and all household members at home. The following symptoms require exclusion from care:

- Fever of 100 degrees F or higher, chills
- Rapid breathing or difficulty breathing
- New loss of taste or smell
- Muscle aches or body aches
- Gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, nausea, vomiting)
- Cough (not due to a known cause)
- Sore throat

The following symptoms in isolation do not require immediate exclusion, but should be closely monitored.

- Headache
- Fatigue
- Nasal Congestion or runny nose (not due to a known cause)

Children who are experiencing any of these symptoms or have a household member who is experiencing any of these symptoms may NOT attend child care. If you observe

symptoms in your child, please contact Heather Quinn, Program Director, at (508) 693-7900 ext. 281 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, your child must have one of the following to return to the program:

- A negative PCR test
- A negative rapid antigen test (children over 2). A kit will be provided to you when you arrive to pick your child up.
- A note from the medical provider that identifies an alternate diagnosis and provides guidance on your child's return

If your child tests negative for Covid-19, they may return when their symptoms begin to improve and they have been fever-free without fever-reducing medication for at least 24 hours. If your child's medical provider recommends Covid-19 testing and you decline, your child may return 10 days after the onset of symptoms, provided that their symptoms have improved and they have been fever-free without fever reducing medication for at least 24 hours.

In the event that the program experiences a Covid-19 exposure, we will notify all enrolled families and staff. We will also notify The Department of Early Education and Care if the exposure impacts program operations.

Covid-19 Exposures

Rapid Cohort Testing

Rapid Cohort Testing will be used to support continued attendance in our program for children who have had direct exposure to an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19. This option ensures that children who experience direct exposure to COVID-19 within a child care setting can monitor their health while continuing to participate in our program.

Who Is Eligible:

Educators/staff and children ages 2 and older with a known direct exposure to an individual who has been confirmed Covid-positive within our program space.

Protocols:

If your child's classroom experiences an exposure, we will notify you via our Remind test messaging app. We will also follow up with a phone call to ensure that you received the information and to offer any additional guidance needed. Children over the age of 2 who have a signed consent to participate in our Test and Stay program will be permitted to remain in care. Families will be provided with rapid antigen tests that must be given on the 5 consecutive calendar days following your child's last exposure to the Covid-positive individual. Children and staff participating in this option must test negative at the start of each day and adhere to our mask-wearing policy to continue to attend our program. Please note that when an individual participating in the Test and Stay program tests positive for Covid-19, the testing timeline is reset. All exposed children must test on the 5 consecutive calendar days following the new exposure.

If your child is not over the age of 2 or does not have a signed consent to participate in our Test and Stay program, they will be required to adhere to the quarantine and test guidelines outlined below. In addition, unvaccinated children who experience a Covid-19 exposure outside of our program space (household, community) will be required to adhere to the quarantine and test guidance outlined below.

Quarantine/Test Requirements

- If your child has been exposed to Covid-19, they must quarantine for the 5 days following the exposure. If they test negative on Day 5 and remain symptom-free, they can return to care on Day 6. Please note that the day of exposure is considered Day 0. For example, a child who is exposed on a Wednesday (Day 0) can test on Monday (Day 5). If they test negative and remain symptom-free, they can return to care on Tuesday (Day 6).
- If a member of your household tests positive, your child's quarantine timeline begins on the day after the positive person's last day of isolation. For example, a child whose parent's isolation ends on a Wednesday (Day 0) will begin their quarantine on Thursday and test on Monday (Day 5). If they test negative and remain symptom-free, they can return to care on Tuesday (Day 6).

Covid-19 Positive Individuals

Children ages 2 and over

- 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. Children returning to care before Day 11 must wear a well-fitted mask whenever they are in close contact with others. 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.

Children under age 2

- If your child tests positive for Covid-19, they must isolate for 10 days. If their symptoms have improved and they have remained fever free for 24 hours (without fever-reducing medication), they may return to care on day 11.

Infection Control

We are taking a number of measures to prevent the spread of illness in our program, including increasing handwashing, enhancing cleaning/disinfecting procedures and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) when appropriate. Effective 2/28/22, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) no longer requires masking in EEC-licensed programs. At this time, 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.

Masks will continue to be required when classrooms are implementing Rapid Cohort Testing (Test and Stay) due to an in-school exposure and on days 6-10 after a positive test result. As is the case with everything we do, mask usage will always be approached in a developmentally appropriate way.

Travel

If your family travels within the United States, there are no testing or quarantine requirements for your child to return to care. We do ask that you consult the CDC's guidance on domestic travel when you are planning your trip. At this time, the CDC recommends that unvaccinated people delay travel. More guidance can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/travel-during-covid19.html>

The CDC has also created a map that provides detailed information about community transmission rates at the state level.

https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#cases_community

If your family or a household member travels out of the country, you will be required to follow the recommendations of the CDC at the time of travel in order for your child to return to care. This information is being updated frequently due to the introduction of the new Covid-19 variants. Up to date information can be found here:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/map-and-travel-notice.html>

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

Heather Quinn: (508) 693-7900 ext. 281; hquinn@mvcommunityservices.org

Judy Thomas: (508) 693-7900 ext. 285; jthomas@mvcommunityservices.org