



COVID Preparedness and Response Plan

Introduction

Our Commitment to Health & Safety

St. Mary of the Hills Preschool is committed to protecting the health of our children, families, staff, and community. The following policies were designed in response to guidance from the Michigan Departments of Licensing and Regulatory Affairs (LARA) and Health and Human Services, in accordance with best practices from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and with everyone's well-being in mind. To limit the potential spread of COVID-19, we will be making some temporary changes to our programming that include robust cleaning and disinfecting procedures and minimizing opportunities for person-to-person exposure (e.g., an infected person spreading respiratory droplets through actions such as coughing, sneezing, or talking). The following plan outlines the recommended practices and strategies we will use to protect the health of our children, staff, and families while at the same time ensuring that children are experiencing developmentally appropriate and responsive interactions and environments.

Changes to Our Physical Spaces

We will use the following strategies in our classrooms and facilities to minimize the spread of illness:

- Where possible, dividing large group spaces to allow more children to safely use the space (e.g., using child- sized furniture, such as rolling shelves and kitchenettes, to divide a room and prevent mixing between groups of children)
- Where possible, limiting or eliminating use of common spaces in the classrooms. When common spaces must be used, we will rotate use of the space and clean between groups
- Rearranging classroom areas to seat children as far apart as reasonably possible and limiting the number of children sitting together
- Using touchless trash cans to provide a hands-free way to dispose of tissues and contaminant
- Ensuring ventilation systems operate properly and increasing circulation of outdoor air as much as possible (keeping windows, doors open to the extent that doesn't pose a safety risk)

Maintaining Consistent Groups

To minimize potential spread of COVID-19, we will engage in the following best practices:

- Classrooms will include the same group of children and providers each day
- Each group of children will be kept in a separate room
- We will eliminate the mixing of children across groups by staggering times for outdoor play and other activities where children from multiple classrooms may have typically been combined.
- Canceling or postponing field trips and special events that convene larger groups of children and families
- Limiting non-essential visitors, volunteers, and activities including groups of children or adults

Social Distancing

Social distancing is not always feasible in preschool settings. We will practice social distancing as often as possible, focusing primarily on snack time, lunch time, and rest time. During regular classroom times, the number of children in any given area of the room will be limited. This will be done in a developmentally appropriate manner that allows the children to have a positive and meaningful preschool experience.

Availability of Toys and Classroom Materials

At this time, we will make the following changes to the toys and materials in our classrooms:

- We will remove toys and objects which cannot be easily cleaned or sanitized between use
- Given that cloth toys are not recommended at this time, we will remove these from classrooms
- We will temporarily suspend use of water and sensory tables
- Toys will be washed and sanitized before being moved from one group of children to another
- Toys will be washed and sanitized daily at the end of each class session
- Children will be required to bring in their own school supplies (crayons, markers, scissors, etc.). These items will be stored in a box labeled with the child's name and will be used by that child only

Snack Time and Lunch Time

To limit opportunities for exposure during snack and mealtimes, we will engage in the following recommended practices:

- We will space seating as far apart as possible (ideally 6 feet apart) by limiting the number of children sitting together and rearranging seating
- Staff and children will wash hands before and immediately after children have eaten
- Children will be required to bring in their own snack every class session (snack must be labeled with the child's name and date)
- Children will be required to bring in a water bottle every class session (labeled with the child's name and date)
- Children who are staying for lunch must also provide their own lunch (lunch bags/boxes must be labeled on the outside with the child's name and date)

Rest Time

To reduce potential for viral spread, we will engage in the following recommended practices:

- Children who attend a class that meets from 9am-3pm will have a rest time at school. Each child is required to bring in a blanket for rest time. The blanket must be brought in a separate bag labeled with the child's name. Blankets will be sent home on a daily basis to be laundered at home before being returned to school the following day.
- Rest mats will be provided by the school, and will be cleaned and sanitized after each use
- Rest mats will be spaced out as much as possible, ideally 6 feet apart.
- When possible, children will be placed head-to-toe (i.e., one child with their head at the top of the mat, the next child over with their head at the bottom of the mat).

Items Brought From Home

Comfort items or other items from home, excluding a backpack/school bag and necessary school items, will not be allowed into the building.

For the well-being of all children, staff, and parents, it is essential that children who are ill remain at home. Please report all illness to the preschool director (248-243-0261 or preschooldirector@smoth.org).

Screening Families & Staff for COVID-19 Symptoms and Exposure

Upon arrival to the program, staff and families will be asked a series of health screening questions:

- Have you or anyone in your household received a positive COVID-19 result?
- Have you or anyone in your household experienced a fever greater than 100.4 or cough with shortness of breath within the past 24 hours?
- Have you or anyone in your household been in close contact with someone who has COVID-19; and/or have experienced symptoms such as persistent cough, fever, difficulty breathing, chills, change in smell or taste, diarrhea, and/or vomiting?

If the answer to any of the above questions is “YES”, your child will not be permitted to stay at school

If families or staff are absent, or otherwise off-site, but experience exposure or symptoms, they should contact: The Preschool Director at 248-243-0261

Daily Temperature Checks

Temperature Checks

As fever is the key indicator of COVID-19 in children, we will check each child's temperature upon daily arrival to the program. Staff will also be asked to take their own temperatures upon arrival to work. Staff will re-check children's temperatures throughout the day if they appear ill or "not themselves" (e.g., flushed cheeks, rapid or difficulty breathing without recent physical activity, fatigue, or extreme fussiness). If a child or staff member has a temperature of 100.4 or higher, they will not be permitted to stay at school.

When children arrive to the program, temperature checks will occur:

- Before children enter their classroom
- Before the parent dropping off the child has left the building
- A preschool staff member will take each child's temperature

To minimize potential spread of illness, staff will:

- wear a face mask while taking the child's temperature
- use a non-contact thermometer
- wear disposable gloves
- disinfect contact thermometers between uses (e.g., cleaned with an alcohol wipe or isopropyl alcohol on a cotton swab)

Responding to Symptoms and Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

Responding to COVID-19 Symptoms On-Site

If a child or staff member has a temperature above 100.4 degrees and/or symptoms such as persistent cough, difficulty breathing, chills, diarrhea, or vomiting, they will be sent home immediately with the recommendation to contact their primary care physician/medical provider. If anyone shows emergency warning signs (e.g., trouble breathing, persistent pain/pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, or bluish lips or face), we will seek medical care immediately.

If a child develops symptoms during school hours:

- Parents will be contacted by phone for prompt pick-up
- The child will be isolated from other children and as many staff as possible (the child will not be left alone)
- The child will wait with the following designated staff member: Preschool Director
- The child and designated staff will wait in the following safe, isolated location: Preschool Office

If a staff member develops symptoms during care hours:

- They will be asked to go home immediately
- If an ill staff member needs to be picked up or otherwise cannot leave the facility immediately, they will wait in the following safe, isolated location: Preschool Office

Reporting Exposure

Reporting Exposure

If a child, staff member, family member, or visitor to our program shows COVID-19 symptoms or tests positive for the virus, we are required to contact the Oakland County Health Department (248-858-1280) and our licensing consultant. Based on the guidance of the local health department, we will determine whether to close individual classrooms or our facility, the duration of the closure, and other next steps, and families will be notified immediately via email. When communicating with families and staff about any COVID-19 cases, we will respect the privacy of individuals and not share health information of a specific person.

Returning to Preschool after Experiencing Symptoms and/or a Positive COVID Test

If a staff member or child has a fever OR a cough (but no other symptoms) the individual must stay home until:

- They have been symptom and fever-free for at least 48 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fevers
- Medical clearance may be required for attendance to resume (doctor's note may not be from someone within the child's family)

If a staff member or child exhibits multiple symptoms of COVID-19, possible exposure is expected, OR an individual tests positive for COVID-19, the individual must stay home until:

- Students and entire household must provide proof of negative COVID-19 test and obtain medical clearance to return to school (doctor's note may not be from someone within the child's family)
- If the school has a staff member or student with a confirmed COVID-19 diagnosis, all families will be notified and provided with the guidance received from the Oakland County Health Department

To accommodate for the potential need to quarantine staff or allow for longer absences from work than normal, we will implement the following staffing plan to ensure we can meet staff to child ratios: Preschool Director or a Guest Teacher will teach classes as needed.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up Procedures

We will use the following recommended practices during drop-off and pick-up times to protect the health of children, families, and staff:

Drop-Off

- Only one adult per family should be present at drop-off/pick-up time. Ideally, this would be the same parent or designated person every day, though we recognize this is not always possible
- We will implement staggered drop-off times to limit contact among parents
- Two entrances will be used (main preschool entrance and gym entrance by playground)
- Families will be assigned an entrance to use when dropping off
- Staff will greet children and families when they enter the building. Temperature checks will be taken upon entrance, and parents will then leave the building

- A preschool staff member will escort the child to his or her cubby and into the classroom. The child will wash his or her hands upon entering the classroom
- Hand sanitizer will be available when entering the building for parents
- Parents must wear face masks/coverings when entering the building
- We ask that parents avoid congregating in a single space or in large groups and to keep 6 feet between families while dropping off their child at school

Pick-Up

- Classes that end their day on the playground will be dismissed from the playground to one parent/person authorized to pick the child up from school
- Classes that end their day indoors will be brought outside and released to one parent/person authorized to pick child up from school at the main preschool entrance or gym entrance (parents will be instructed where children will be dismissed from)
- We ask that parents avoid congregating in a single space or in large groups and to keep 6 feet between families while picking up their child from school

Signing In/Out

- Please bring your own pen to sign in and out daily
- If you do not have your own pen, a preschool staff member will sign your child in/out

Classroom Volunteers

At this time, classroom volunteers will not be allowed.

Handwashing

We will reinforce regular health and safety practices with children and staff and continue to comply with licensing regulations and CDC hand washing guidelines as follows:

- Staff and children will wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
- Soap and water are the best option, especially if hands are visibly dirty. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will be available for children when entering the classroom each morning. Hand sanitizer will only be used when parents have given written permission. Staff and children should cover all surfaces of their hands with hand sanitizer, rubbing them together until they feel dry.
- Staff should assist children with hand washing and use of hand sanitizer to ensure proper use and prevent ingestion
- Staff and children (with frequent reminders and support) will cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve and wash hands immediately after

- Hand hygiene is especially important after blowing one's nose, going to the bathroom, before eating or preparing food (or helping children do any of these actions)

Cleaning and Disinfecting

Cleaning and Disinfecting Surfaces

We will engage in the following cleaning and disinfecting practices in accordance with CDC recommendations:

- Daily cleaning/disinfecting of **high-touch surfaces** (e.g., sinks, toilets, light switches, door knobs, counter and tabletops, chairs)
- Normal routine cleaning of **outdoor spaces (playground)**, with special attention to high-touch plastic/metal surfaces (e.g., grab bars, railings)
- Use of a **schedule** for regular cleaning and disinfecting tasks
- Ensuring staff wear **disposable gloves** to perform cleaning, disinfecting, laundry, and trash pick-up, followed by hand washing
- Cleaning **dirty surfaces** using detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection
- Use of **CDC-recommended disinfectants** such as EPA-registered household disinfectants, diluted bleach solution, and/or alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol
- Keeping cleaning products **secure and out of reach** of children, **avoiding use near children**, and ensuring **proper ventilation** during use to prevent inhalation of toxic fumes

Cleaning and Disinfecting Toys

We will engage in the following best practices to clean and disinfect toys:

- We will clean toys frequently, especially items that have been in a child's mouth
- We will set aside toys that need to be cleaned (e.g., out of children's reach in a dish pan with soapy water or separate container marked for "soiled toys")
- We will clean toys with soapy water, rinse them, sanitize them with an EPA-registered disinfectant, rinse again, and air-dry
- We will clean toys daily at the end of each session
- Children's books, like other paper-based materials, are not considered a high risk for transmission and do not need additional cleaning or disinfection procedures

Safety Equipment

Face Masks/Coverings for Preschool Staff Members: Staff members are required to wear face masks/coverings at all times while at school

Face Masks/Coverings for Children: Children are required to wear face masks/coverings at all times while at school except when eating/drinking during snack and meal times, during rest times for children who are at school from 9am-3pm, and when outdoors. Mask breaks will be given during the day as needed.

Face Masks/Coverings for Parents: Parents are required to wear face masks/coverings when entering the building

Use of Gloves

Staff will wear gloves in a manner consistent with existing licensing rules (for example, gloves should be worn when handling contaminants, cleaning, or when serving food). Staff members should wash hands before putting gloves on and immediately after gloves are removed. Gloves are not recommended for broader use and do not replace hand washing.

Partnering and Communication with Families and Staff

Communicating with Staff and Families: We will actively communicate with staff and families to determine when they will return to work/school if they have been out, discuss concerns or questions, share new policies and expectations, and confidentially discuss any extenuating circumstances that have emerged and/or any health concerns/conditions that may elevate risk for complications if exposed to COVID-19. Please contact the Preschool Director with any questions.

Training Staff

To support staff in effectively engaging in best practices and making personal decisions, we will provide learning opportunities to help all of us understand how COVID-19 is transmitted, the distance the virus can travel, how long the virus remains viable in the air and on surfaces, signs and symptoms of COVID-19, and our new policies and procedures as outlined in this plan.

Supporting Children's Social-Emotional Needs

Staff and families will partner together to support the needs and emotional reactions of children during this time. We anticipate that children will experience a wide range of feelings during this transition period. Some children will be relieved, some will have initial challenges with separation from their parent(s), some may demonstrate anger at the "disappearance" of their child care provider, and some may act out toward other children. Whatever the reactions, we acknowledge that staff and families may need some new tools in their toolkit to assist the child with emotional regulation and we will work together to support all caregivers.

The following resources will be available for staff and families to support children:

[Talking with Children about COVID-19](#), from the CDC [Helping Young Children Through COVID-19](#), from Zero to Thrive (includes Arabic and Spanish translations)

****Plan is subject to change. Any updates to this plan will be provided to families.****