

# Hartley Nature Preschool 2021-22 Pandemic Policy Information Sheet



Updated 6/3/2021

Enclosed you will find highlights of the practices and policies at Hartley Nature Preschool during the COVID-19 pandemic.

As a licensed child care center we are required to follow COVID-19 guidance from the MN Department of Health (MDH), MN Department of Human Services (DHS), and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). HNP policies and procedures are constantly changing with evolving public health guidance. The full HNP Pandemic Operating Plan will be provided to parents in August and upon request and updates to COVID-19 policies and procedures will be communicated throughout the preschool year.

HNP primary mitigation strategies:

- Maximize outdoor time in all weather
- Maximize use of Hartley building and grounds indoors and outdoors as the weather allows
- Teachers and families mask as per public health guidance for child care facilities
- Daily health screenings for staff and children
- Increased frequency of cleaning/sanitizing throughout the day and between groups
- Vigilant attention to hand hygiene

## 1. Daily Health Screening

HNP must, like every other school and child care, be extra cautious with our sick policies during the COVID-19 pandemic especially because none of the children in our care are currently eligible to be vaccinated. **Children and staff must pass ALL areas of the [home screening tool](#) daily before attending preschool.** As part of the health screening, **be sure to take your child's temperature daily before school.** Staff or students who do not pass all areas of the health screening cannot attend preschool.

We are all in this together. It is up to each of us to be diligent about protecting our school community by keeping your child home when they are ill or when they meet [quarantine guidelines](#) laid out by public health agencies.

HNP follows exclusion guidelines provided by MDH in the [decision tree](#) for youth and school programs. It is likely these guidelines will be updated before September to include guidance for vaccinated people and that they may change throughout the school year.

## 2. COVID-19 Symptoms

As your child, you, or a family member experience symptoms, please refer to the [decision tree](#) from MDH for information on when to keep your child home and when they can return to HNP. If you aren't sure what to do, call a health care provider for advice.

HNP requires written proof of negative test results for a child to return to school. Please email Kaitlin and/or your child's teachers a screenshot of your child's test results.

Following the direction of MDH, we are not able to accept home antigen tests as proof of a negative test at this time.

### **Child stays home and pursues testing or quarantine if they have one "more common" symptom of COVID-19:**

- New cough or cough that gets worse
- Difficulty/hard time breathing
- Fever of 100.4 degrees F or higher
- New loss of taste or smell

### **Child stays home and pursues testing or quarantine if they have two or more "less common" symptoms of COVID-19:**

- Sore throat
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Extreme fatigue/feeling very tired
- New severe/very bad headache
- New nasal congestion/stuffy or runny nose

## 3. Limited Contact

A major component of HNP COVID-19 mitigation comes from limiting the intermixing of cohorts whenever possible. As such:

- To the extent possible, classroom groups will be kept separate indoors and outdoors.
- The Friday Morning Class is a mix of students from more than one class and will take place outdoors as much as possible. The Friday Morning Class will use the full day classroom and/or exhibit hall in the event of severe weather and for snacks, lunches and warm ups as needed.
- At this time the Nature Center building is only available for families during drop off for full day families to place gear in appropriate locations and for half day families in the event of severe weather at drop off time or if a child needs to use the bathroom. Families are asked to move quickly through the building and to maintain social distancing at all times. The building will reopen to families and the public when COVID-19 recommendations allow.

- We hope MDH/CDC guidance will allow family and community volunteers to join HNP classes this coming school year. We will update our volunteer policies as guidance changes.

#### **4. Social Distancing**

##### **Age-Appropriate Social Distancing Between Children**

- Our social distancing comes from keeping cohorts of children as separate as possible. Within the same class, children will be allowed to play together and be close to one another to support their social-emotional development.
- We will do our best to eat snacks and meals outdoors, as the weather allows, and to allow children to spread out as they eat. Please note that children do sit at tables together when eating snacks/lunches indoors.
- Rest time is an important part of a busy nature preschooler's day and will continue to happen in a cozy, dim room. Children's cots will be placed as far apart as possible in the nap space and children will sleep head to toe. Each child will have their own labeled cot and nap time blankets, lovies, etc will be stored so they don't touch another child's items. Children may not wear masks at nap time.

##### **Social Distancing with Families**

- Drop off and pick up will occur outdoors as much as possible; please be mindful of social distancing when walking near other families
- A teacher will sign your child in and out on the clipboard to reduce the need to pass the clipboard or share a pen.

#### **5. Hand Hygiene**

High quality and frequent hand washing practices, as described in the HNP Parent Handbook, will continue to be followed.

- In non-winter months children will be given hand sanitizer at drop off before joining in play.
- Children will not use hand sanitizer at drop off when the temperatures drop and we need to keep fingers warm and mittens dry. In these colder months the focus will be on cleaning hands at times that mittens come off, such as before and after eating or after using the restroom.
- Hand sanitizer will be used with adult supervision frequently throughout the day and whenever soap and water are not available.

#### **6. Masks**

##### **Masking for Teachers and Families**

- MDH masking requirements for child care centers are currently being revised to be in line with CDC recommendations for vaccinated individuals. We do not know what the masking requirements will be for fall 2021.
- Anyone who wishes to continue to wear a mask is certainly welcome to, regardless of vaccination status.
- During the 2020-21 preschool year teachers were required to wear masks at all times indoors and outdoors. Families and siblings 6 years of age and above were required to wear masks at all times in HNP programming space. We were surprised and pleased to find that our Hartley preschoolers were not bothered by their teachers wearing masks; it's very normal for children to see adults wearing masks and children care about keeping their teachers, friends, and communities healthy and safe.

## Masking for Children

Children who meet the MDH definition of reliable mask wearers are absolutely welcome to wear masks when at preschool. This means they can wear a mask without frequently touching it or removing it. The following outlines our masking protocol for children:

- From [MDH](#): Children age 2 through 5 years who can reliably wear a face covering or face shield in compliance with CDC guidance on [How to Wear Cloth Face Coverings](#) may do so. This means they can wear it without frequently touching or removing it.
- Masks will be child led, that is children will be in charge of their own masks. Staff will offer a reasonable amount of verbal reminders to mask wearing children, but will not help children adjust the masks. It is not safe to have staff touch 16 children's wet masks throughout the entire class session.
- Staff will direct children to place their mask in a pocket or backpack if they begin touching the mask or their face frequently, begin sucking on the mask, drop the mask in an unclean location, or if a teacher feels the mask has become a risk to the child's health.
- Children will not wear masks when eating, drinking, or napping.
- Children will be allowed to remove their mask at any time they wish, including to eat snow, when physically active, when too warm, etc.
- Children are welcome to wear masks or a face covering (balaclava, neck warmer, buff) outdoors. On days we dress as "nature ninjas" a balaclava or other warm face covering is required for safety in cold temperatures. A fabric face mask will not be allowed as a warm face covering on "nature ninja" days.

## 7. Cleaning and Disinfecting

HNP will continue to follow our regular rigorous cleaning and disinfecting policies. During the pandemic, staff will also:

- Increase cleaning between groups of children.
- Clean high-touch surfaces frequently.
- Continue to use natural, porous items like sticks and rocks for play and learning indoors and outside whenever possible.

## 9. COVID-19 Vaccine Status

HNP staff began receiving COVID-19 vaccines in January 2021. While the vast majority of HNC staff is vaccinated, please note that vaccination status, like other medical information, is private data protected by law. None of our staff members are able to share another person's private medical information, including vaccination status. HNP will continue to follow all COVID-19 requirements from MDH and CDC for operating a child care center including following the requirements for vaccinated and unvaccinated individuals as appropriate.

## 10. Current Travel Restrictions

To protect the HNP community and keep our school open, HNP is following CDC travel restrictions which currently include the following current restrictions:

- Unvaccinated people, including children, must follow the [CDC travel guidelines for unvaccinated people](#) including getting tested 3-5 days after travel and self-quarantining for a full 7 days upon return from travel, even if the test result is negative.
- Those who don't get tested must stay home and self-quarantine for 10 days after travel.
- Children who do not travel do not have to stay home if a family member has traveled or if the family is hosting an out of state or international visitor.

- Fully vaccinated people may follow the CDC's [Interim Public Health Recommendations for Fully Vaccinated People](#).
- Should a child or household member experience symptoms at any time, including after travel, children must continue to follow the [decision tree](#) and [home screening tool](#).

## 11. COVID-19 Related Closures

Hartley Nature Preschool is licensed as a child care center by the Minnesota Department of Human Services and is governed by MN Rule 3. As a licensed child care center, we are not obligated to follow COVID-19 related decisions of local school districts. For example, we do not intend to close if ISD 709 decides that all students will shift to distance learning. Our aim is to continue to provide care--as long as it is safe and feasible to do so. However, as circumstances change this plan may also change.

We anticipate that quarantines will still be possible for the foreseeable future until all program participants are eligible for vaccines. Depending on circumstances and Department of Health Recommendations, it's possible that a classroom or the entire HNP program could be closed one or more times for a quarantine due to a positive case of COVID-19. We highly encourage your family to make back up child care arrangements in case HNP has a temporary closure.

HNP may need to adjust our programming due to a stay at home order, changing enrollment numbers, staff illness, and other unforeseen circumstances and may need to:

- Combine classes
- Offer only specific classes/cancel specific classes
- Limit care to families of Tier 1 or Tier 2 workers
- Close specific classes or the entire preschool temporarily

## 12. September-December Financial Policies Related to COVID-19 Related Closures

Because we want to be responsive to changing circumstances and the needs of families, ongoing safety considerations, and the need to maintain organizational flexibility, the following financial policies will be in effect from September 2021 through December 2021, and then re-evaluated for spring 2022. In the event HNP needs to close for COVID-19 related reasons:

- Hartley Nature Preschool will not issue refunds for any COVID-19 related closures totaling less than four weeks cumulatively between September-December.
- Hartley Nature Preschool will offer refunds or credits for any closures totaling more than four weeks cumulatively between September-December.
- If an individual child misses preschool for quarantine or illness, Hartley Nature Preschool will not issue refunds.
- The May 2022 deposit will remain non-refundable regardless of a child's attendance.
- You may choose to keep your child home at any point and continue paying tuition to hold their spot. We will continue to require 30 days written notification of permanent withdrawal from HNP.
- During a short-term closure, such as for a mandated quarantine, we may offer distance learning activities on scheduled class days, depending on staffing and other circumstances.
- We understand that COVID-19 has negatively impacted many family's financial situations and we welcome individual families to reach out about financial policies at any time.