

Hartley Nature Preschool 2021-22 COVID-19 Policies and Procedures



Updated 8/27/2021

The health and safety of our preschoolers and staff is our utmost priority. All of our planning for operating Hartley Nature Preschool during the time of COVID-19 has been and will continue to be informed by guidance from the MN Department of Health (MDH), MN Department of Human Services (DHS), St. Louis County Public Health, and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). HNP also considers, but does not necessarily follow, ISD 709 decisions.

HNP policies and procedures will change with evolving public health guidance. You will receive updates about COVID-19 policies and procedures from the preschool director via emails and the preschool newsletter throughout the preschool year.

MDH and the CDC recommend that child care providers implement layered COVID-19 prevention strategies to protect the children in our care, especially because preschool aged children are not yet eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

COVID-19 prevention strategies include:

- Mandatory vaccination or weekly testing for all staff
- Masks required indoors for all teachers, preschoolers, adults, and family members above age 2 regardless of vaccination status
- Maximize outdoor time
- Minimize indoor time as daily schedules and weather conditions allow
- Daily health screenings for children
- Increased frequency of cleaning/sanitizing throughout the day
- Vigilant attention to hand hygiene

1. Symptoms

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. **All families are required to follow the MDH [decision tree](#) as applicable to their vaccination status and the vaccination status of household members.**

Email Kaitlin at psdirector@hartleynature.org or call the Nature Center at 218-724-6735 if you have questions about whether or not your child can attend preschool or when they can return after symptoms. We will likely recommend that you call your child's health care provider for advice on symptoms and testing.

Here is a [handy guide from MDH](#) with recommendations on who should get tested and when based on vaccination status.

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

Please remember that our regular sick policies are still in effect. See the Parent Handbook for further sick policies and information on when your child can return to HNP after experiencing symptoms.

2. Testing

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.

We are not able to accept home antigen tests as proof of a negative test at this time. This policy will be updated when MDH provides additional guidance.

Contact your child’s health care provider to arrange testing or see the [MDH website](#) for testing locations, searchable by zip code and test type. At this time it is likely to take *at least* 24-78 hours to get test results.

3. Quarantine

All families are required to follow the MDH [quarantine guidelines](#).

- A full 14 day quarantine is required at this time for children; a shortened quarantine is not allowed.

4. Masks

Masks Required for Children Indoors

Following the recommendations of MDH and CDC due to the rise of the delta variant and the increase in COVID cases among preschool aged children, masks are **required** for all preschoolers indoors.

- In partnership with families, teachers will help children learn how to effectively wear a mask and become a reliable mask wearer.
- Wearing a mask is a skill children are learning and practicing, just like they are practicing toileting, hand washing, and independently dressing for the outdoors. We will kindly and lovingly support each child's development as they practice becoming a reliable mask wearer.
- Staff will help children put on their face masks when the class goes indoors.
- Children will not wear masks when eating, drinking, or napping.
- Preschoolers are required to bring at least two labeled masks to preschool each day in a clean, labeled, reusable container or sealed plastic bag.
- This policy will be continuously evaluated as the guidance and transmission rates evolve.
- Teachers will support a child who wants to wear a mask outdoors, but masks are not required outdoors.

Masking for Teachers

- At this time teachers will mask while indoors. The Hartley Nature Center building is owned by the City of Duluth, which currently has a mask mandate for city owned buildings.
- During times of [substantial and high community transmission](#) all teachers will mask at outdoor drop off and pick up and at any time they are within 6 feet of a child.
- During the 2020-21 preschool year teachers were required to wear masks at all times indoors and to wear masks outdoors when social distancing could not be maintained. 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.
- Indoor and outdoor masking policies for teachers will be updated as the transmission level and public health guidance change. Throughout the school year teachers will always be welcome to wear a mask at any time regardless of vaccination status even in times of lower transmission levels.

Masking for Families

- At this time **parents and family members who are age 2 and above are required to mask at all times inside the Nature Center regardless of vaccination status.** The Hartley Nature Center building is owned by the City of Duluth, which has a mask mandate for city owned buildings.
- Masks are **recommended** but not required at outdoor drop off and pick up.

5. COVID-19 Vaccination Policy

- The CDC recommends vaccination as the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. All eligible individuals are *strongly encouraged* to get vaccinated to help protect the children in our care. Visit [vaccines.gov](https://www.vaccines.gov) to find out where you and your family members can get vaccinated.
- All HNC staff are required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 or to test weekly and provide test results to their supervisor.

- All HNC volunteers that come into contact with program participants are required to be vaccinated.
- HNP staff began receiving COVID-19 vaccines in January 2021. Please note that vaccination status, like other medical information, is private data. None of our staff members are able to share another person's vaccination status.

6. Cohorts

- 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 for snacks, lunches and warm ups when needed and in the event of severe weather.
- To protect program participants and staff the Nature Center is currently closed to the public when programming is operating. We hope to have the Nature Center and playscape open to preschool families and the public on weekends.
- The Nature Center building is 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.

7. Volunteers

- We hope MDH/CDC guidance will allow family and community volunteers to join HNP classes later this fall.
- When we are able to welcome volunteers, only fully vaccinated parents or family members will be allowed to volunteer. Limited, pre-approved medical exemptions may be considered by the preschool director on a case by case basis.
- While we aren't able to welcome family members as volunteers at this time, know that parents/guardians DO have access to their child at any time when in our care, such as to pick up a child for an appointment.
- We may have college students joining our classes for practicum, student teaching, and/or practice teaching opportunities. Part of our mission is to help pre-service educators understand the importance of time outdoors for young children and to get practice in this important work. College students are required to mask indoors and outdoors and to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 with limited, pre-approved medical exemptions.

8. 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.
- 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 to respect families who may prefer you to be distanced. If you would like to chat with another family, please gather outside of the drop off line and away from the outdoor classroom.
- A teacher will sign your child in and out on the clipboard to reduce the need to pass the clipboard or share a pen.

9. 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.

10. 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.

11. Ventilation

- The HNC ventilation system is set to draw fresh air into the building as frequently as the outdoor temperature and air quality allow. The ventilation system has a HEPA filter.
- We open windows and doors and turn on ceiling fans in the classrooms whenever possible.
- Thanks to a generous donation from [Lake Superior Dental](#), we have 2-3 portable HEPA air filters in each classroom.

12. Current Travel Restrictions

To protect the HNP community of children, teachers, and families and to keep our school open, the following travel restrictions are in effect:

- Unvaccinated children who travel out-of-state or internationally by **mass transit** (i.e. airplane, bus, train) must follow the [CDC travel guidelines for unvaccinated people](#) including getting tested 3-5 days after travel and staying home 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 travel out-of-state by private vehicle to visit only vaccinated people are not required to quarantine. For example, if a child travels with their family to visit vaccinated grandparents in another state do not need to quarantine unless they also visit unvaccinated

people or have a high risk exposure. A child *would* need to quarantine if they travel out-of-state to visit unvaccinated people, such as cousins.

- 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.

13. 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, particularly because preschoolers are not yet 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

14. 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 do not intend to offer distance learning activities.
- 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.