

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



Updated 11/23/2021

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 ISD 709 decisions.

You will be notified when HNP policies and procedures change with evolving public health guidance. At this time, MDH and the CDC recommend that child care providers implement layered COVID-19 prevention strategies to protect the children in our care, especially since children under age 5 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 regardless of vaccination status for everyone above age 2
- 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. **All families are required to follow the MDH [decision tree](#) as applicable to their vaccination status and the vaccination status of household members.** Here is a [handy guide from MDH](#) with recommendations on who should get tested and when, based on vaccination status.

Email Kaitlin at [psdirector@hartleynature.org](mailto: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.

**Child stays home and pursues testing or quarantine if they have one “more common” symptom of COVID-19, regardless of vaccination status:**

- 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, regardless of vaccination status:**

- 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.*

### **Children Who Are Fully Vaccinated**

- Fully vaccinated = 14 days after the final dose in the vaccine series
- The [decision tree](#) still applies to vaccinated children if they are experiencing symptoms.
- Fully vaccinated children may continue to attend preschool even if a household member is symptomatic, seeking a COVID-19 test, or sick with COVID-19, as long as the child remains symptom free.

### **Children Who Have Had Lab-Confirmed COVID-19 in the Last 90 Days**

- Families should reach out to a health care provider for guidance if the child develops symptoms to help determine if the child needs testing and when the child can return to preschool.

## **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.

Any PCR or antigen test given to a symptomatic child in a healthcare facility (a clinic, the DECC testing site, Walgreens/CVS, etc) will be accepted. PCR tests are required as proof of a negative test for return from a 10 day shortened quarantine because antigen tests are not as accurate when people don’t have symptoms. We are not able to accept home antigen tests as proof of a negative test at this time. We hope to move towards accepting home antigen tests as proof of a negative test for symptomatic children when MDH guidance allows.

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.

### 3. Masks

Throughout the pandemic our Hartley preschoolers have taken masks in stride. Children care about keeping their teachers, friends, and communities healthy and safe. It's very normal for preschoolers to see adults and older siblings wearing masks at school and in the community and preschoolers are generally excited to try these "big kid" skills for themselves!

#### **Masks Required for Children Indoors**

Masks are **required** for all preschoolers indoors at this time.

- 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 bag.
- Teachers will support a child who wants to wear a mask outdoors, but masks are not required outdoors.
- This policy will be continuously evaluated as the guidance and transmission rates evolve.

#### **Masking for Teachers**

- At this time teachers will mask 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 outdoors.
- Throughout the school year teachers will always be welcome to wear a mask at any time regardless of vaccination status.

#### **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.

### 4. 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 encouraged to get vaccinated to help protect the children in our care.

#### **Staff and Volunteer Vaccination Policy**

- All HNC staff are required to be vaccinated for COVID-19 or to test weekly with a PCR test and to provide test results to their supervisor.
- All HNC volunteers who 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.

## Child Vaccination Policy

- At this time the COVID-19 vaccine is not required for children to attend preschool. All eligible children are encouraged to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19.
- If your child does get the COVID-19 vaccine please provide us with a copy or photo of your child's proof of vaccine.
- Proof of vaccination must be on record for children to be exempt from quarantine following a confirmed exposure. *See quarantine policies below.*
- Vaccination status is protected, private medical information. Each child's proof of vaccination will be maintained in their folder along with their immunization record.

## Vaccination Resources

- [Vaxforkids](#) is the MDH resource for families to learn about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine for children, what to expect when their child gets vaccinated, and why it is important for children to be vaccinated.
- Check for vaccine appointments using the CDC's [Vaccine Finder](#).

## 5. Quarantine

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

The following options are currently available should a child be a close contact of a positive case of COVID-19 at preschool, in another care setting, in their family, or in the community:

### Children who are fully vaccinated

- Fully vaccinated = 14 days after the final dose in the vaccine series.
- Fully vaccinated children do **not** need to quarantine after exposure to a positive case of COVID-19 as long as they remain symptom free.
  - Fully vaccinated children should get a PCR test 5-7 days following a confirmed exposure, monitor for symptoms, and wear a mask indoors.
  - A fully vaccinated child who displays any one or more symptoms following an exposure should isolate immediately and get tested.
- For more information refer to [When You've Been Fully Vaccinated \(www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html\)](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html)

### Children who are not fully vaccinated

- The safest option is to quarantine for 14 days.
- To reduce the burden on families and keep children in school, families may choose to return after a 10 day shortened quarantine.
  - A negative **PCR test on day 8 or later is required** for return after a 10 day shortened quarantine.
  - A child who displays any one or more symptoms following an exposure should isolate immediately and get tested.
  - It is recommended to get tested immediately and, if negative, 5-7 days after the exposure.
  - Refer to [CDC research brief on shortened quarantines](#) for the data on shortened quarantines.
  - Refer to [MDH Close Contacts and Quarantine: 10 day quarantine](#).

## Children within 90 days of having confirmed COVID-19

If a child has recovered from COVID-19 in the past 90 days and is exposed again:

- The child does not need to get tested unless they develop symptoms.
- The child does not need to quarantine if ALL of the following are true:
  - Their illness was lab confirmed in the last 90 days.
  - They have fully recovered.
  - They do not currently have any symptoms of COVID-19
- Families should reach out to a health care provider for guidance if the child develops symptoms. There are many other childhood illnesses, such as RSV and Croup, circulating in our community that have the same symptoms as COVID-19, so an evaluation from a health care provider to determine a diagnosis would be beneficial.

### **Exposure from Another Care Setting**

- You may follow the 10 day shortened quarantine following exposure at another care setting as per MDH guidance and HNP policies.

### **Exposure from a Household Member**

- When an unvaccinated child lives with someone who has COVID-19, the child should quarantine during the time the person might be contagious (their isolation period), as well as the time the child could develop COVID-19. This means the child needs to quarantine for 24 days or more. The child's 14-day quarantine period starts the day after the person they live with completes their 10 day isolation period.
- The 10 day quarantine is not an option if the exposure is to a household member.

### **Continuity of Care**

As long as we have staff, we intend to be open to provide your family with the care you are depending on whenever your child is able to be at HNP. Going forward, it is likely that we will have children who will not need to be quarantined in the case of a class wide exposure due to a variety of reasons, including vaccination status, not being in class on the exposure date(s), or recently having COVID.

## **6. 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.

- A teacher will sign your child in and out on the clipboard to reduce the need to pass the clipboard or share a pen.

## 7. 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 for snacks, lunches and warm ups when needed and in the event of severe weather.

## 8. Volunteers

- We look forward to welcoming family volunteers into our classes when MDH/CDC guidance allows.
- When we are able to welcome volunteers, only fully vaccinated parents/guardians/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 will 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 at all times and to be fully vaccinated for COVID-19 with limited, pre-approved medical exemptions.

## 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. Travel Restrictions

- Not in effect at this time.

## 13. Nature Center Building

- To protect program participants and staff the Nature Center is currently closed to the public when programming is operating. The Nature Center and playscape are open to the public on weekends and during school breaks as staffing allows.
- 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/pick up times and if a child needs to use the bathroom.

## 14. 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 children under age 5 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 your child's classroom has a temporary closure.

## 15. January-May Financial Policies Related to COVID-19 Related Closures

The following financial policies are in effect September 2021-May 2022. We want to be responsive to changing circumstances and the needs of families, ongoing safety considerations, and the need to maintain organizational flexibility and this policy will be reconsidered if necessary. In the event HNP needs to close for COVID-19 related reasons:

- HNP will not issue refunds for any COVID-19 related closures totaling less than four weeks cumulatively between September 2021-May 2022.
- HNP will offer refunds or credits for any closures totaling more than four weeks cumulatively between September 2021-May 2022.
- If an individual child misses preschool for quarantine or illness, HNP 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 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.