

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



Updated 10/4/2021

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](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.

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.

PCR tests are required if a child experiences symptoms during days 1-14 following exposure to a positive case of COVID-19 and when families choose a 10 day shortened quarantine.

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 if a child has symptoms *and* they have not been exposed to a positive case of COVID-19. Home antigen tests will not be allowed as proof of negative tests during days 1-14 following exposure to a positive case of COVID-19. We will update families if we are able to accept home antigen tests at some point in the future.

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. 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.

## 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 *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.

## 5. 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.

## 6. 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.

## 7. 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.

### **8. 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.

### **9. 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.

### **10. 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.

### **11. Travel Restrictions**

Not in effect at this time.

### **12. Quarantine**

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

Following discussion with our health care consultant and public health officials, HNP will move forward allowing families to choose the full 14 day quarantine or a shortened 10 day quarantine following a confirmed exposure to COVID-19. 14 days is the safest amount of time to quarantine to reduce COVID-19 spread, but we know the 14 day quarantine is a huge burden for families. We are hoping the shortened quarantine will balance the benefits of in-person learning for our children, reliable care for our families, and safety for the children in our care. The 10 day quarantine,

alongside negative PCR test results, significantly reduces the risk of transmission and we feel that there are many benefits to having children back in preschool a few days earlier.

See the [CDC research brief on shortened quarantine](#) for the data driving this policy change.

### Details for the 10 Day Shortened Quarantine Option

- Testing with a PCR test is still recommended immediately and 3-5 days after exposure.
- Testing with a PCR test is **REQUIRED at day 8 or later** after exposure for return after 10 days.
- PCR testing at day 7 or later for return after 10 days will be considered on a case by case basis by the preschool director if a family cannot get a timely PCR test based on local testing capacity.
- The 14 day quarantine is required if you choose not to test.
- The days are counted with the last day of exposure = day ZERO. Return to preschool would be your child's first scheduled day after completing the 10 days, which may fall on day 11 or later.
- According to our health consultant and our St. Louis Public Health contact, **if your child develops any symptoms, including even one less common symptom (such as a runny/stuffy nose), during days 1-14 following a confirmed exposure they must be tested for that symptom.** If they aren't tested for that symptom they need to stay home 10 days from the start of the symptom, even if that is beyond the 10 days of the initial quarantine.
- When you choose the 10 day shortened quarantine you must be vigilant about any symptoms that arise during the full 14 days. We will send children home on days 11-14 if they display any **one or more symptoms** for which they have not received a negative PCR test.
- Symptoms to watch for and test for include **any one or more** of the following:
  - 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
  - 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

### 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.

### 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 not being in class on the exposure date(s), recently having COVID, or, eventually, being fully vaccinated.

### 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.