



SPCNS Covid-19 Health & Safety Plan Jan 23

This updated version of Shadyside Presbyterian Church Nursery School's (SPCNS) COVID-19 Health & Safety Plan is based on the Center for Disease Control's (CDC) guidance for Early Care and Education (ECE) programs, and it outlines main strategies for SPCNS to reduce the spread of COVID-19 and maintain safe operations. While fewer children have been sick with COVID-19 compared with adults during the pandemic, children can be infected with the SARS-CoV-2 virus that causes COVID-19, get sick with COVID-19, spread the virus to others, and, more rarely, suffer from long-term effects.

SPCNS serves children ages 2 to 5 years of age who may not be up to date on their COVID-19 vaccines. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing continuing layered COVID-19 prevention strategies to protect them and to give families time to complete the available vaccination series. This guidance is based on current scientific evidence and lessons learned from our own experience and other schools implementing COVID-19 prevention strategies.

In selecting the most appropriate layered prevention strategies, SPCNS carefully considered multiple factors, such as the level of vaccination among children, staff, families, and the community; the physical space in which the program operates; the families and children served; and the current levels of community transmission, outbreaks, or trends. SPCNS reserves the right to modify this Health & Safety Plan if circumstances change regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in ways that would require modifying the number or level of prevention strategies which would continue to protect all children, families, and staff. Any such changes will first be reviewed by our medical consultants, Board of Trustees, and any other advisory groups, and then be communicated to all families and nursery school stakeholders.

Prevention Strategies:

❖ Promoting vaccination

Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. While vaccines do not prevent infection or transmission, people who are up to date of their COVID-19 vaccines are at a lower risk of symptomatic or severe infection.

- All SPCNS teachers and staff who work with children are required to be up to date on their vaccines, as medically appropriate.
- All eligible children and families (including extended family members who have frequent contact with children in SPCNS) are strongly encouraged to be up to date on vaccines, as medically appropriate.
- **Any parent or caregiver who must stay or wishes to remain in the classroom or school beyond the brief designated arrival/departure times MUST be up to date on their vaccinations.** This applies to the 2-, 3-, and 4-year-old programs. Proof of vaccination in these situations will be required.

❖ Mask usage

When transmission levels of COVID-19 are rising or high, people can protect others as well as themselves by consistently wearing high-quality (KN95, for example), well-fitting masks in public spaces. According to the CDC, ECE programs should weigh a variety of considerations when choosing when to mask, including the vaccination status of its students. **SPCNS has opted to make mask use required indoors when the CDC Community Level of COVID-19 in Allegheny County is "HIGH".**¹ Children love to play close to one another, and when local cases are high or rising sharply, their masks will provide an important layer of protection while they engage in healthy and developmentally appropriate play. When the CDC "Community Level" is low or moderate, but COVID-19 transmission levels are still high, masking may still be recommended but not required. This information will be communicated clearly to parents through email, app/text alerts, and signage. This policy may be revisited as the school year progresses and we gather more information about vaccination uptake of our student population; vaccine/booster efficacy against current and novel variants; and severity and transmissibility of current and novel variants.

When CDC Community Level of COVID-19 in Allegheny County is HIGH:

- **Indoors:** Mask wearing at all times in the nursery school for all adults and children 2 years and up, regardless of their vaccination status. Children will remove their masks during snack time/lunch, and they will be placed further apart than when masking is not required.
- **Outdoors:** Mask wearing is optional. Families and teachers will communicate as to which families would like outdoor mask wearing so that the children can be supported appropriately.
- Official exceptions include anyone who cannot wear a mask due to a medical condition, including those with respiratory issues that impede breathing, a mental health condition, or disability. Physician documentation of such conditions is required.
- If a child is visibly upset, struggling, or unable to wear a mask properly, our focus will be on making sure that we can successfully teach them how to properly wear a mask and see that they are comfortable and not negatively affected by it. If necessary, we will prioritize having them wear masks during times when it is difficult to separate children and/or staff (e.g., while standing in line or during drop off and pick up), and it will be approached in a calm and learning manner that supports children's development and well-being. We encourage children to practice using masks before the start of school.

When CDC Community Level of COVID-19 in Allegheny County is LOW or MEDIUM:

- At **LOW or MEDIUM** Community Levels, if Community Transmission rates of COVID-19 are still high, indoor mask use may be recommended, but not required. Outdoors: Mask wearing is optional. Families and teachers will communicate as to which families would like indoor and/or outdoor mask wearing so that the children can be supported appropriately.
- Those who are considered close contacts **must remain masked** for 10 days after suspected/known exposure.
- Families with an immunocompromised child should discuss their situation with the director, and these situations will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

¹ CDC-reported Allegheny County COVID-19 Community Level can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/science/community-levels.html> by entering Pennsylvania and Allegheny County in the dropdown menu

❖ **Physical distancing and cohorting**

Maintaining physical distance is often not feasible in an ECE setting, especially during certain activities (e.g., diapering, feeding, holding/comforting, etc.) and among younger children in general. Thus, it is especially important to layer multiple prevention strategies, (as described in other sections of this plan) to help reduce transmission risk. Cohorting means keeping people together in a small group and having each group stay together throughout an entire day. Cohorting can be used to limit the number of children and staff who come in contact with each other, especially when it is challenging to maintain physical distancing, such as among young children. As we more fully understand how to layer COVID-19 mitigation strategies (especially vaccinations, ventilation, and masking), we are optimistic that this year we can reintroduce the mixing of cohorts in Lunch Bunch and Wonderful Wednesdays.

- In general, as much time as possible will be spent outside, especially snack and lunch when masks are mandated.
- If the Community Level is **HIGH** and masking requirements are in place, children will be distanced as space allows while they are eating snack and lunch.
- No events that require large crowded indoor gatherings (such as school wide celebrations) will be scheduled. Smaller, class-specific gatherings can continue (masked or unmasked dependent upon community spread).

❖ **Ventilation**

Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Along with other preventive strategies, including wearing a well-fitting, multi-layered mask, bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside. This can be done by opening multiple doors and windows, using child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows.

- Classroom windows and doors will be open if possible to bring in fresh air whenever classes are in session. Additionally, HEPA filter air purifier units operate in each classroom.

❖ **Handwashing and respiratory etiquette**

Adults and children should practice handwashing and respiratory etiquette (covering coughs and sneezes) to keep from getting and spreading infectious illnesses including COVID-19. SPCNS will monitor and reinforce these behaviors and provide adequate handwashing and sanitizing supplies.

- Children will wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds upon arrival at school, before and after eating, after playing outdoors, after using the bathroom, and whenever hands are visibly dirty. Parents are encouraged to use hand sanitizer upon entry as well.
- If hands are not visibly dirty and soap and water are not readily available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers with at least 60% alcohol can be used. Staff will supervise the use of hand sanitizer. There will be hand hygiene stations at school and classroom entrances.

- In addition, staff will wash hands before and after encountering bodily fluids, used masks, or handling food garbage.
- Children will be guided to cough and sneeze into their elbow or a tissue, and to refrain from touching their eyes, nose, mouth, and mask.

Guidelines for illness, exposure according to vaccination status, and testing to return

❖ Staying Home

Staying home when sick is essential to keep COVID-19 infections out of SPCNS and prevent spread to others. It also is essential for people who are not fully vaccinated to quarantine after a recent exposure to someone with COVID-19. The overlap between COVID-19 symptoms with other common illnesses means that some people with symptoms of COVID-19 could be ill with something else. This is even more likely in young children, who typically have multiple viral illnesses each year. Although COVID-19, colds, and flu illnesses have similar symptoms and are different diseases, they share a common vital strategy to further reduce the transmission of the disease: children who have symptoms of infectious illness or certain symptoms of COVID-19 may not attend school.

- Daily Screenings-families must remain on the alert for signs of illness in their children and keep them home when they are sick. See below for specific symptom and necessary actions.
- Any adults, staff, or children who have a fever of 100.4 °F or above or other signs of illness will not be admitted to SPCNS. Staff will sign in and document health status. Nursery school families will self-monitor and report any signs of illness to SPCNS.
- If symptoms emerge during the school day, the child will leave the classroom with a staff person and kept comfortable until picked up. We ask that you come within one hour to take them home.
- Your child will be excluded from school if s/he has any ONE of the following symptoms of COVID-19:
 - Fever ≥ 100.4
 - Shaking chills
 - Shortness of breath/trouble breathing
 - New loss of taste or smell
 - New body/muscle aches
 - Nausea /vomiting
 - New or worsening cough
 - Headache
 - New fatigue
 - Sore throat
 - Congestion / runny nose
 - Diarrhea

❖ Exposure

All children and adults, regardless of vaccination status, if exposed to COVID-19

- Do NOT need to quarantine
- Get tested at least 3-5 days after the last exposure
- Monitor for symptoms and wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days after the last close contact, test if symptoms appear.

❖ **Testing when symptomatic or a close contact**

- The CDC recommends all people with symptoms of COVID-19 or a close contact get tested. To return to school, *the child must be free of symptoms (or resolving in the case of cough and congestion/runny nose) AND have a negative result on either a Rapid Antigen Test (RAT) or a PCR test.* The length of time the child must stay out of school will depend on whether the child has COVID-19 or another illness.
- Subsequently, parents will inform the school if their child has had a COVID-19 test and what the result is when available.
- **If your child has confirmed (via PCR or RAT) COVID-19 or is suspected of having COVID-19 (exposed and symptomatic but not tested), your child may return to school after**
 - **Waiting** 10 days since symptoms first appeared **and** 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving

OR

 - **Testing** negative via RAT or PCR.
 - **RAT:** They receive two negative RAT results, taken 24 hours apart, on or after day 5 (of either symptom onset or a positive test) **and** 24 hours with no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications **and** other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving
 - **PCR:** They receive a negative PCR test. (These tests can remain positive even after the contagious phase of illness has ended).

❖ **Contact tracing and community notifications**

- SPCNS may collaborate with state and local health departments to confidentially provide information about people diagnosed with or exposed to COVID-19. This allows us to identify which children and staff with positive COVID-19 test results should isolate, and which close contacts should quarantine.
- SPCNS will notify staff and families of children who were close contacts as soon as possible (within the same day if possible) after we are notified that someone in the program has tested positive.

❖ **Cleaning and disinfecting**

An enhanced cleaning, sanitizing, and disinfecting schedule in compliance with CDC guidelines will be followed. In general, current CDC recommends that cleaning once a day is usually enough to

sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Teachers and church Sextons will help with cleaning procedures.

- High touch hard surfaces such as countertops, door handles, light switches, tabletops, etc. will be disinfected after school is dismissed each day.
- Mostly toys and educational materials that can be cleaned and sanitized will be used. Toys that children have placed in children's mouths or that are otherwise contaminated by body secretion or excretion will be set aside until they are cleaned and sanitized.

❖ **Additional Considerations**

- Any visitors to SPCNS, including but not limited to direct service providers (DSP) and early intervention support, must adhere to the provisions in the SPCNS Health & Safety Plan. Visitors and DSPs must sign in on the log provided near the office.
- SPCNS will base decisions regarding all other issues of curricula, classroom management, and other daily school operations upon the guidelines for ECE programs issued by the CDC, when appropriate.