

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS COVID-19 GUIDELINES- DROP-IN CLASSES

Irvine Nature Center believes strongly that children need time playing and exploring outdoors now more than ever as the world navigates the COVID-19 pandemic. We are committed to making our programs safe for children and staff and their families. To do so, we consult the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Baltimore County Health Department (HD).

No list of restrictions, guidelines, or practices will remove 100% of the risk of exposure. However, all families and staff are crucial in keeping our community safe and reducing the risk of exposure through these policies and procedures.

OUTDOOR CLASSES

Nearly all activities will occur outdoors. In the event of thunder, lightning, strong winds that result in the closing of trails, or prolonged periods of torrential rain or excessive cold or hot temperatures, we will move class out of the elements into a conference room (Fern A). Please note that since we will still be outside on cold, hot, or rainy days as much as possible, please dress your child appropriately. If Irvine must cancel class due to a weather-related event, all participants will be refunded.

Whenever indoors, staff will do their best to distance students and windows will be kept ajar to increase air flow. A note about ventilation: in Fall 2020, Plasma Air Needlepoint Bipolar Ionizers were installed in Irvine's HVAC system to meet CDC guidelines and to provide a supply of sustainable, clean, uncontaminated air.

VACCINATION

As of October 13, 2021, Irvine Nature Center requires all staff and all ECE volunteers and interns to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Individuals with an approved medical or religious waiver can opt out of vaccination and instead submit weekly COVID-19 test results. Staff are offered paid leave to get the vaccine or any recommended boosters. At this time, all Irvine staff have been fully vaccinated.

There currently is no requirement for program participants or their caregivers to be vaccinated, but all those eligible are strongly encouraged to do so. Nearly all children enrolled in our programs are unable to get vaccinated at this time and the DELTA variant appears to be more threatening than previous strains to young children. One of the strongest protections we offer our children and other people's children is for all individuals in our child's lives to be vaccinated. For information about where to get a vaccination, please visit the [Baltimore County Health Department website](#).

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

During all arrival and pick up times, all caregivers and siblings over 2 yrs old must be masked and do their best to keep a full 6' of social distance from individuals not in their household.

When you arrive at Irvine, please first pause at the gate house to let them know you are here for Bauer Explorers. A staff person at the kiosk stand at the head of the trail will conduct a quick health screening. After passing health screening, please walk your child down the path to the Glen outside the Woodland Garden. **Caregivers may not send students to the Glen unattended.** Caregivers may not linger in the Glen.

HEALTH AND EXCLUSION POLICY

We follow the MSDE Decision Aid: Exclusion and Return for Persons with COVID-19 Symptoms and Close Contacts in Child Care, School, and Youth Camps in deciding when individuals may not participate in a class. Due to the ability for vaccinated individuals to still transmit COVID-19 and the unvaccinated status of nearly all participants, Irvine has adopted a stricter policy for vaccinated individuals than that suggested by health officials. Please see p. 3.

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The very best thing you can do to ensure the health of other students and staff is to keep your child home if anyone in your household is unwell or was exposed to COVID. If your child will be absent due to any health reason, please let us know by emailing the Director of ECE and Stephanie Holzman.

Health Screenings

Every individual attending or working an ECE class must have a health screening and temperature check completed prior to joining the program or starting work. A staff person will conduct this screening at the head of the trail before you drop off your child. Health screening questions are based on the exclusion chart on p. 3. Any individual who fails the health screening will not be permitted to join the class.

When Symptoms Develop After Drop Off

If an individual develops symptoms consistent with a COVID-19- like illness or typical exclusionary symptoms during class, they will be sent home without exception. A child with symptoms will be isolated from the rest of the class but still under supervision until they are picked up. **Children must be picked up within 30 minutes if they are ill.**

Health Advisory Notification

All families must promptly inform the Director of Early Childhood Education if a student tests positive for COVID-19, is notified of an exposure, or develops any symptoms of COVID-19 with the 48 hours after attending a class. Failure to promptly inform the Director may result in the unintentional spread of disease and possible dismissal from future Irvine Programs.

When Irvine ECE is informed of a child or staff that developed a communicable disease or probable or confirmed COVID within 48 hours of attending class, Irvine will inform families in that child/staff's class. This communication will be provided so that parents can monitor their children for any symptoms and quarantine as needed. This communication will include guidance on quarantine, monitoring for symptoms, and when to be tested. You should also expect a call from HD contact tracers if there was a confirmed COVID case. During that time, it is imperative you keep the ECE director informed of the development of any symptoms. Please note, Irvine will abide by all privacy laws and not divulge the identity of sick individuals.

UNIVERSAL MASKING REQUIREMENT

Per CDC and MSDE recommendations, all individuals over 2 yrs old participating in Irvine ECE programming must wear a face mask whenever indoors (unless eating, lying down to rest, or sleeping), unable to keep social distance outdoors, and during arrival and dismissal. **This applies to all individuals, regardless of vaccination status.**

We recommend having at least 3 masks on hand. Any type of cloth or disposable face covering will be accepted, however, please consider how difficult they are to put on. We request all student face coverings have elastic straps that do not require tying. If a child's mask is on a tether, it must have an anti-choke mechanism on the back. **We strongly encourage students to have a KN95 or KF94 mask on days we spend non-eating times indoors (inclement weather).**

We fully understand that masks can be uncomfortable at times and young children will need assistance and frequent opportunities for mask breaks. With proper coaching and encouragement most children are able to wear a facemask appropriately.

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Individuals may NOT participate if	Until ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they <i>or any household member</i> tested positive for COVID-19 (regardless of vaccination status) 	quarantine is completed according to Health Department Guidelines.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they had prolonged contact with an individual with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 10 days. The CDC defines prolonged contact as w/in 6feet for at least 15 min. 	<p>If the student is NOT vaccinated: 10-14 days, dependent upon HD guidance.</p> <p>If the student/caregiver/staff is vaccinated: after submitting a negative COVID test conducted after completing a 5-day quarantine since the exposure (provided no one in the household has symptoms).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a <i>household member</i> has had prolonged contact with an individual with confirmed COVID-19 in the last 10 days. 	<p>If the participant/staff is NOT vaccinated: after the exposed individual submits a negative COVID test conducted 72 hrs after exposure AND that individual completes the HD recommended quarantine.</p> <p>If the participant/staff is vaccinated: after the exposed individual submits a negative COVID test conducted 72 hrs after exposure (provided no one in the household develops symptoms).</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they <i>or any household member</i> exhibited any symptom below in the last 10 days. <div style="border: 1px solid red; padding: 5px; margin: 5px 0;"> <p style="text-align: center; color: green; margin: 0;">COVID-19 SYMPTOMS*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fever of 100.4 degrees+ • Sore throat • Cough • Difficulty breathing • Nausea or vomiting • Diarrhea • New onset of severe headache • New loss of taste or smell <p style="font-size: small; margin-top: 5px;">*For chronic conditions such as asthma, symptoms should represent a change from baseline and a doctor's note must be supplied listing this as a previously diagnosed condition.</p> </div>	<p>If no known exposure (one of the below)...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A) a negative test result for the sick individual is issued AND symptoms have improved, no fever for 24hr w/out medication AND applicable criteria in the Communicable Criteria have been met. B) a doctor's note for the sick individual is provided documenting symptoms are due to specific alternative diagnosis AND other criteria listed in (A). C) at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication AND improvement of other symptoms. <p>If known exposure (one of the below)...</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> A) a negative test result is issued AND quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. B) a doctor's note is provided documenting symptoms are due to specific alternative diagnosis AND quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. C) at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND no fever for at least 24hrs w/o medication AND improvement of other symptoms AND quarantine completed according to MDH and local guidance. <p>**If a household member of a fully vaccinated staff person exhibits a symptom, the staff may still attend so as long as they are symptom free and there is no known COVID exposure in the household.**</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they <i>or any household member</i> are awaiting test results due to symptoms or known exposure. (regardless of vaccination status) 	negative test results are issued.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they have any of the following non-COVID related symptoms: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Fever of 100 -100.3 *Unexplained rash (until cleared by a doctor) *Infectious pink eye (until cleared by doctor and on antibiotics for 24 hrs) *Head lice (until treated) *Green or yellow runny nose if paired with other symptoms <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold; font-size: small;">Individuals must be fever/vomiting/ diarrhea free for 24 hours w/out the aid of medication.</p>	

All tests must be PCR tests. Rapid tests will not be accepted.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

ECE staff will do its best to create social distancing between students, however, strict social distancing limits children’s play and social development and therefore will not be expected. When children touch one another or share items, teachers will encourage children to do so in the safest way possible and instruct children to wash their hands after. There will be moments when people are close and staff will still physically comfort an upset child, assist with putting on and removing gear, etc. We will be the loving teachers we are and still have a developmentally appropriate and child-honoring practice.

HAND WASHING

All individuals must wash their hands frequently throughout the day and at the following times:

- Upon arrival (using hand washing stations in the class grove)
- Before and after putting on or assisting with a face covering
- After touching their face, preparing food, or eating
- After using the restroom
- At appropriate transitions

When a sink and soap are not available, a hand sanitizer will be used. If water and soap are not available after eating, a handwipe will be used to remove food residue prior to using hand sanitizer.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

ECE staff will follow CDC guidelines for appropriate cleaning and disinfection. When local infection rates have risen to the “substantial” level or after an illness in class, all surfaces and materials will be disinfected fully.

COMMUNICATION-Who to Contact

If you have questions or concerns about the class: Head of Homeschool programs, Stephanie Holzman

If you are unsure if your child should attend due to possible symptoms or a possible exposure: contact Katie directly. If you are leaving a voicemail please include your name, your child’s name, and your phone number.

If your child is going to be absent for any reason: email Stephanie Holzman and Katie Rooney.

For questions about payment or registration: contact Education Program Coordinator, Moriah Munsch.

For grievances to which you feel you have not received a satisfactory response: contact the Director of Education or the Deputy Director of Irvine.

If you are running late or an urgent matter arises during class: contact Stephanie Holzman.

Contact Information

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