

We are committed to making our programs safe for children and staff and their families during the COVID-19 pandemic. To do so, we consult the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and the Baltimore County Health Department (HD).

It is imperative that all caregivers are aware of and follow all procedures. **Please share these Guidelines and any appropriate program Handbook with all individuals responsible for picking up or dropping off your child.** Please keep in mind that these guidelines will be updated as needed based on local transmission trends, vaccination rates, official guidance or state/county regulations, and as evolving science dictates.

VENTILATION INDOORS

All classes spend the majority of their time outdoors, decreasing the likelihood of community spread. However, 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. Little Birds classes may start their classes indoors on colder days due to the more sensitive nature of its younger participants.

Whenever indoors, staff will do their best to distance students and windows will be kept ajar to increase air flow. 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. Each indoor space also employs [Corsi-Rosenthal boxes](#).

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.

The best protection you can provide your children against COVID-19 is by getting them vaccinated. The vaccine is now readily available, safe, and effective at protecting children as young as 6 months against severe cases of COVID-19. While Irvine Nature Center does *not currently require* students or their families to be vaccinated against COVID-19, we *strongly encourage* families to vaccinate their child. It not only protects them, but our whole community—especially those at high-risk. For more information about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccine please visit [the CDC](#). To find a vaccination site please visit [Maryland's Vaccine Locator](#).

If your child develops rare but possible vaccine side-effects that are also on the COVID-19 symptom chart (see p. 5), they will need to be tested or get a doctor's alternate diagnosis **only if the symptom lasts more than 24 hours**. This is to rule out the possibility that they had COVID at the time of vaccination. You CANNOT contract COVID-19 from the vaccination. Children must still be fever-free without the aid of medication for 24 hrs to attend.

EXCLUSION POLICY

The very best thing you can do to ensure the health of other students and staff and to help classes continue to operate is to keep yourself and/or your child home if they are unwell or had *prolonged* exposure to COVID-19.

All families must promptly inform the Director if a student/staff or their household member tests

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positive for COVID-19, is notified of an exposure, or develops any symptoms of COVID-19. Failure to promptly inform the Director may result in the unintentional spread of disease and possible termination or dismissal from Irvine Programs. **Individuals must inform the Director immediately if their child is absent for any health reason (as listed below).**

Individuals may NOT participate if	Until ...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they tested positive for COVID-19 	quarantine is completed (5 full days) and there is an improvement of symptoms with no fever for 24 hrs without the aid of medication. Must mask until day 11. (See flow chart on p. 7.)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they exhibit any symptom below, despite no known exposure to COVID-19. <div style="border: 2px 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 deg. + OR chills • Cough • Difficulty breathing • Nausea or vomiting • Diarrhea • New onset of severe headache • New loss of taste or smell • Sore throat </div>	EITHER: A) a negative PCR test result is issued, B) a doctor's note is provided documenting symptoms are due to specific alternative diagnosis , or C) it has been at least 10 days since symptoms first appeared AND: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> symptoms have improved, no fever for 24hr w/out medication AND applicable Communicable Criteria have been met.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they were exposed to someone with confirmed COVID-19. 	may attend <u>masked</u> but must be tested on Day 6. (See flow chart on p. 8 .)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> they had <i>prolonged</i> exposure to an individual with COVID (e.g., a household member, close indoor encounter for a prolonged period of time, etc.) 	Five days of quarantine have passed after last contact, then must be tested on Day 6. (See flow chart on p. 8 .) Please note, Day 1 is the first full day after the ill individual is released from quarantine OR after the last contact with the sick individual.
If individuals have any of the following non-COVID related symptoms they may not attend: *Fever of 100 degrees or more *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;">Individuals must be fever/vomiting/ diarrhea free for 24 hours w/out the aid of medication.</p>	

*If an individual is unable to mask consistently and appropriately or they refuse to test, they must stay home through Day 10.

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. For **Preschool students, this must appear on the health intake form.

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 class and required to mask until they are picked up. **Children must be picked up within 30 minutes if they are ill.** Please ensure that the emergency contact information is up to date.

POSSIBLE QUARANTINE & CLOSURE

If we are informed of a *single* confirmed case of COVID-19 at Irvine, all families of the affected class(es) will be informed and we will follow these procedures:

Little Birds	*Affected class will be closed for 10 days after last exposure due to age/inconsistency with masking.
Nature Preschool & Earth Friends Outdoors	*A class that was exposed may attend class but will be required to wear masks indoors and when unable to distance while outdoors for 10 days after an exposure (until Day 11). *All individuals must then provide a test taken on Day 6. (See TESTING box below.) *If a family refuses to test or their child is unable to consistently and properly wear a mask, they will be required to quarantine for 10 days. *Irvine will provide families with 3 at-home rapid test kits if their child was exposed to COVID-19 at Irvine. Or families may opt to pursue a single PCR test on their own.

If there is a COVID-19 outbreak (defined by the Health Department) in any particular class, the whole class will be quarantined per MSDE and Health Department guidance.

In the two weeks after an exposure, it is imperative you keep the ECE Director informed if you or your child develops any symptoms.

HEALTH ADVISORY NOTIFICATION

When Irvine ECE is informed of a child or staff member who developed a communicable disease or probable COVID, within 48 hours of attending class, Irvine will inform families in that child/staff’s class via the brightwheel communication app. This communication will be provided so that parents can monitor their children for any symptoms and to make informed decisions about their child’s attendance. Please note, Irvine will abide by all privacy laws and not divulge the identity of sick individuals.

TESTING

- If *exhibiting symptoms*, **must** take PCR test.
- Tests *after an exposure* may be PCR or rapid. However, due to higher likelihood of false negatives, a series of *three* negative rapid tests--on days 6, 8, and 10--equate to one negative PCR result on day 6 or later. ([FDA recommendations](#))
- All test results must be submitted to the ECE Director. For rapid tests, please submit a photo of the test with the individual’s name and the date and time the test was given written directly on the test or on a piece of paper behind the test.

MASKING

Irvine will **not** require staff, students, or families to wear masks (indoors or out) unless...

- we are attending an **indoor** community-wide event like Family Orientation or Adventure Apparel Shopping Day (all individuals regardless of vaccination status)
- an individual was exposed but asymptomatic (case-by-case basis, indoors at all times and outdoors when not distanced)*
- there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a class (class specific, indoors at all times and outdoors when not distanced)*
- our [CDC community level](#) rises to high (ECE wide)

***Please note, if your child is unable to or refuses to properly and consistently wear a mask, they may not attend class for 10 days after the last exposure.**

All individuals and families may continue to wear masks as they are comfortable. Staff will attempt to encourage children to wear masks if families request, but please understand this will not be fail proof and it will be extremely difficult for children to wear a mask if all the other children are not required to.

Students must have face coverings on hand daily. We recommend having at least 2 masks for Little Birds and 3-hour classes and 4 masks for full-day students. KN95 or KF94 masks are highly effective. If a child's mask is on a tether, it must have an anti-choke mechanism on the back. All masks must be labeled.

HANDWASHING

All individuals (including staff and children) must wash their hands frequently throughout the day and at the following times:

- Upon arrival (Earth Friends Outdoors and Little Birds families will use hand washing stations in the class gathering areas)
- Before and after putting on a face covering
- Before and after helping a child put on a face covering
- After touching face or ears
- Before and after preparing food or eating
- After using the restroom
- At appropriate transitions
- After touching another person.

All individuals will use a proper hand washing method using soap and water, scrubbing for at least 20 seconds before rinsing and drying off with a paper towel. When a sink and soap are not available, a hand sanitizer of at least 60% alcohol will be used under supervision of staff. If water and soap are not available after eating, a handwipe will be used to remove food residue prior to using hand sanitizer.

SOCIAL DISTANCING

Strict social distancing limits children's play and social development. ECE staff will do its best to create social distancing while *indoors* between students in the following ways:

- Plan activities that naturally lend themselves to more social distancing
- Use visual cues or markers to show students appropriate distance from one another
- Establish and encourage physically distant ways of showing affection and congratulations (i.e., air hugs, "long distance" high fives, and animal calls)

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

ECE staff will follow CDC guidelines for appropriate cleaning and disinfection. All items will be cleaned between class use and at least daily. Frequently touched indoor surfaces and handwashing stations will be disinfected daily. All dishware and utensils will be washed in a dishwasher. When local infection rates have risen to the "high" level or after an illness in class, all surfaces and materials will be disinfected fully. If classrooms or inclement weather spaces are used by non-ECE programs, they will be fully disinfected by janitorial staff. An EPA-registered cleaner and disinfectant approved for fighting COVID-19 will be used for all cleaning and disinfecting.

TRAVEL AND LARGE GATHERINGS

Irvine Nature Center no longer has any post-travel restrictions, but please keep in mind travel and large gatherings (indoors especially) increase your risk to exposure. We encourage you to read and follow the [CDC travel recommendations](#).

MAKE UP DAYS, DISTANCE LEARNING, and/or REFUNDS

If Irvine is required to cancel class due to a Health Department declared outbreak, Irvine will do its best to make up class, provide long-distance learning opportunities, or provide a partial refund:

Little Birds and Earth Friends Outdoors

Each class series has a built-in one-week period for a make-up due to a COVID or weather event. After that initial make-up week is used, we will make a reasonable attempt to provide distance-learning activities during a prolonged closure. After initial notification of a closure, you will receive additional information within 48 hours of the make-up day or any plans for distance learning during the period of closure. Distance learning *may* take the form of virtual class meetings or activities and resources sent to you virtually.

Please remember the one make-up day at the end of the program is the only one we have. Once it is used, there will not be another make up day and no refund will be given for weather-related closures.

Preschool

In the event of an unplanned closure, Irvine will make reasonable attempts to adjust the calendar and/or provide distance-learning activities. After initial notification, you will receive additional information within 48 hours of any plans for distance learning during the period of closure. Distance learning *may* take the form of virtual class meetings or activities and resources sent to you virtually. Any changes to the calendar will take additional time to coordinate with greater Irvine Nature Center as it is a shared space with other programs. Please be patient with us as we try to navigate this.

Possible Refunds- all Programs

If Irvine is unable to provide a make-up day due to a class-wide COVID- related event, families will be offered a discount of 50% of the tuition for the duration of the closure. Please be patient as Irvine Nature Center processes any refund.

For information about individual student make-ups due to illness, please see program-specific information.

COMMUNICATION

It is imperative that we have honest, open, and timely communication about your family's health and exposure to COVID-19. We need your help to keep our whole commUNITY safe as well as to prevent any temporary closure of Irvine programs. All information will be kept confidential.

Before the start of the class series, all ECE families must download the app on your phone(s) so that we can quickly share critical announcements in regard to exposures, closures, and changes in health operations. It will save time and ensure everyone has up to date information. We will also use this app to share newsletters, photos, and all the excitement of our time with your children. **Please use the brightwheel messaging feature to inform us about any and all absences or health concerns.**

WHOM TO CONTACT

If you are unsure if your child should attend due to possible symptoms or a possible exposure: contact the Director of Early Childhood Education, Katie Rooney, directly via brightwheel.

If your child is going to be absent for any reason: contact the Director of ECE directly. We must document all absences. **Please report any and all illness or questions about exclusion directly to her.** She can be reached most efficiently through brightwheel. If this is a pressing matter such as an illness, please do not delay. **If you are leaving a voicemail please include your name, your child's name and class, and your phone number.** In all messages about health concerns, please be specific and provide appropriate dates, symptoms, and whether or not there was a known exposure to anyone in the household. Thank you.

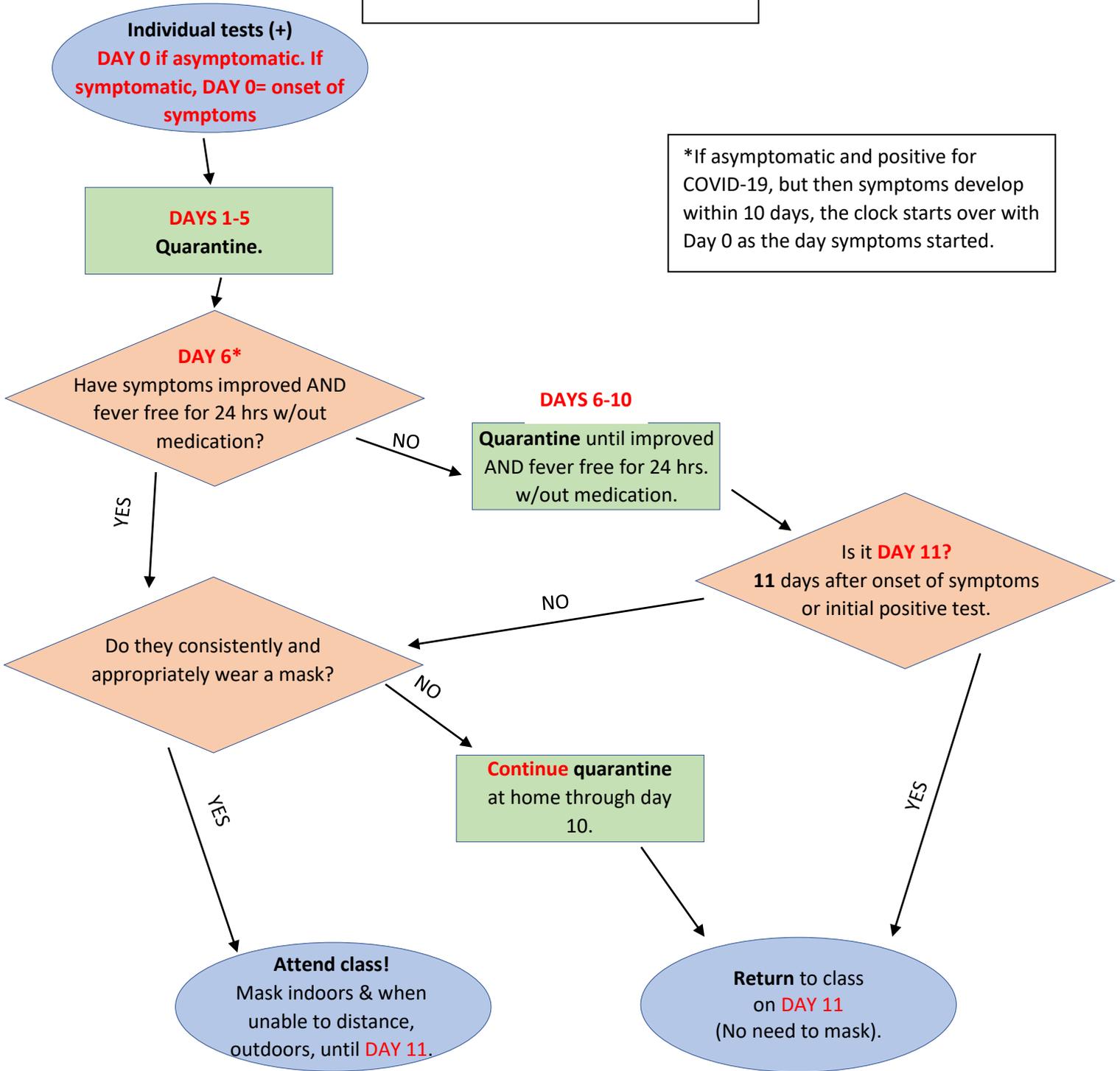
If you have health related questions or concerns you prefer class teachers or other admin do not see, please send a message to "Admins only" or a message to "Staff & admins" alerting the Director, Katie, to an email you have sent her at RooneyK@ExploreNature.org.

If you feel that your concerns are not being addressed or if you have questions about policies:

- If a Little Bird of Preschool family, please contact the Director of Early Childhood Education and The Nature Preschool, Katie Rooney.
- If an Earth Friends Outdoors family, please contact the Head of Homeschool programs, Stephanie Holzman, or the Director of Early Childhood Education, Katie Rooney.

For all other topics (including questions or concerns about your child's day): please contact your child's teachers via brightwheel "staff & admins" messages.

After Positive Test for COVID-19



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When Staff or a Student is Exposed to COVID-19

