

These Guidelines were created in consultation with 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.**

VENTILATION INDOORS

All classes spend most 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.

Whenever indoors, staff will open windows 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

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. 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 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](#).

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 stay home if unwell.

All families must promptly inform the Director if a student/staff 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).**

General Exclusion Guidelines: If individuals have any of the following symptoms they **may not** attend. These symptoms are exclusionary regardless of COVID-19 status:

- *vomiting, nausea, or diarrhea
- *fever of 100 degrees or more
- *unexplained rash w/out doctor clearance
- *untreated head lice
- *green/yellow runny nose paired w/ other symptoms
- *infectious pink eye (until cleared by a doctor and on antibiotics for 24 hrs)

Individuals must be fever/vomiting/ diarrhea free for 24 hours w/out the aid of medication.

If you test positive for COVID-19: Follow [CDC guidance](#).

- Stay home and isolate *through* day 5. Day 0 is onset of symptoms or day of positive test.

EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION COVID-19 ADDENDUM

- If symptoms improved AND fever-free for 24 hrs without the aid of medication, return to class on Day 6, *masked* indoors.
- Continue to mask indoors through day 10 or until conditions are met to end masking early.
- *If symptoms worsen or return after ending isolation, start isolation over with day 0.

If you were exposed to COVID-19: Follow [CDC guidance](#).

- Attend class, *masked* indoors. For those unable to mask, stay home.
- On day 6, test against COVID-19.
- If tested using a rapid test, test again on day 8.
- Continue to mask indoors through day 10 or until conditions are met to end masking early. Day 0 is the last day of exposure.
- **If you develop symptoms, isolate and test immediately.**

If you have possible COVID-19 symptoms (see box):

- Take a PCR test. If negative, symptoms are improved, and you do not meet general exclusion guidelines, you may attend class.
- OR take a rapid test. If negative and you do not meet general exclusion guidelines, you may attend class, *masked*.
 - [Test again](#) after 48 hours. If negative, then you may attend maskless.
- OR submit a doctor's note documenting symptoms are due to a *specific alternative diagnosis*.
- OR stay home for a full 10 days from onset of symptoms

POSSIBLE COVID-19 SYMPTOMS**
<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

*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.

If you have possible COVID-19 symptoms AND were exposed to COVID-19: assume you are positive.

- Isolate at home.
- Stay home until symptoms are improved and you no longer meet general exclusion guidelines AND either
 - you have a negative PCR test
 - OR have 3 rapid tests taken 48 hours apart.
- Continue to mask through day 10 or until conditions are met to end masking early.

TESTING- GENERAL GUIDELINES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PCR and rapid tests are accepted, however rapid tests require a series of 2-3 tests spaced 48hrs apart in line with FDA recommendations. • Irvine will provide staff/families with at-home rapid test kits if their child was exposed to COVID-19 at Irvine. • If a family refuses to test after an exposure or symptoms, they will be required to quarantine for 10 days. • Test results must be submitted to the Director of ECE only when exposed in class or to end masking early.

MASKING

Irvine does **not** generally require staff, students, or families to wear masks. In the following instances, individuals are required to mask while indoors:

- on days 6-11 after having COVID-19
- within the 10 days after exposure to COVID-19
- a symptomatic unexposed individual returns to class after a negative rapid test and is awaiting the 2nd test (48 hrs later)
- an individual was exposed but asymptomatic
- our [CDC community level](#) rises to high

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.

What if my child cannot mask?

If your child is unable to or refuses to properly and consistently wear a mask, they may be required to stay home through the end of the 10 days since exposure or onset of illness. However, they may be able to test out of masking. See conditions above.

WHEN SYMPTOMS DEVELOP AFTER DROP OFF

If an individual develops possible COVID-19 symptoms, a guardian will be contacted to either come administer a rapid test to permit their child to continue attending class masked or take their child home. Children that exhibit typical exclusionary symptoms will be sent home without exception. A child with symptoms will be isolated from the class and required to mask when indoors 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	*Class will be cancelled for 7 days after exposure. Asymptomatic individuals may attend maskless if they meet conditions described above.
Nature Preschool & Earth Friends Outdoors	*An exposed class may attend but is required to mask indoors through day 10. Asymptomatic individuals may attend maskless once conditions described above are met. *All individuals must report Day 6 test results. (See TESTING box above.) *If a child is unable to mask, they must stay home until conditions described above.

We will follow Health Department guidance in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak (as defined by the Health Department). In the two weeks after an exposure, it is imperative you keep the ECE Director informed if you or your child develops any symptoms.

REMOVING MASKS EARLY

In general, individuals must wear a mask for a full 10 days after exposure or since onset of COVID-19. However, the CDC has outlined when an individual may remove a mask early *if they are symptom-free*:

“With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than day 10.”

Therefore, asymptomatic individuals exposed to COVID 19 can attend maskless as early as day 8 with a second negative test that day.

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.

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 or helping a child put on a face covering
- After touching face or ears
- Before and after preparing food or eating
- After using the restroom

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.

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.

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.

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. All information will be kept confidential.

Before the start of the class series, all ECE families must download the brightwheel 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 due to a health-related matter including exposure to COVID-19: 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 if you prefer email, message first to alert 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.

Thank you for taking the time to read the guidelines and helping to keep our community healthy.