



Lake-Geauga United Head Start

COVID-19 Mitigation Policy 2023

LGUHS is committed to the health and safety of our staff, children and families and has created this evidence-based mitigation policy to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. LGUHS will regularly monitor COVID-related guidance from the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, the Ohio Department of Education, the Office of Head Start, the Center for Disease Control, the Ohio Department of Health and our local Health Districts to ensure that we are following the most up to date recommendations. While LGUHS is implementing thorough cleaning, face covering and distancing procedures as recommended by multiple regulatory agencies, there is always risk of exposure to communicable diseases when in a school setting.

The following guidance was reviewed in the development of these procedures and guidelines for daily operation:

- Center for Disease Control Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning issued on 10/13/22
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-childcare-guidance.html>
- Lake County Health District guidance issued on 8/9/22
- Geauga County Health District guidance issued on 8/8/22
- ODJFS Communicable Disease Chart issued 7/2022
<http://www.odjfs.state.oh.us/forms/num/JFS08087/pdf/>
- ODE Back to School Guidance for Preschool and School-Age Child Care issued on 8/30/22
<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Early-Learning/Back-to-School-Guidance-for-Preschool-and-School-A>

These procedures may be revised if there are significant changes in guidance from regulatory agencies or evidence of high transmission of COVID within our centers or community or if the current injunction to the HSPPS changes is lifted. LGUHS will monitor local conditions as well as guidance from all applicable agencies.

COMMUNITY RISK LEVEL STRATEGIES

CDC's COVID-19 Community Levels are one resource that assists us in making decisions about what COVID-19 prevention strategies to use based on whether our counties are classified as low, medium, or high. These levels take into account COVID-19 hospitalization rates, healthcare burden, and COVID-19 cases. We also consider guidance from local health officials, the actions of our local school districts and center-specific data such as absenteeism rates or number of COVID cases, when considering other local

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conditions and factors that impact prevention strategies. We strive to implement strategies that are effective but with minimum disruption to learning.

The CDC COVID-19 Risk Level Guidelines are as follows:

Low	Medium	High
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stay up to date with COVID-19 vaccines• Maintain ventilation improvements• Avoid contact with people who have suspected or confirmed COVID-19• Follow CDC recommendations for isolation if you have suspected or confirmed COVID-19• Follow the CDC recommendations for what to do if you're exposed to someone with COVID-19• If you are at high risk of getting very sick, talk with healthcare provider about additional prevention actions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All of the items in the LOW category• If you are at high risk for severe illness, wear a high-quality mask or respirator• If you have household or social contact with someone at high risk for getting very sick, consider self-testing and wearing a high-quality mask when indoors with them	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• All of the items in the LOW and MEDIUM category• Wear a high-quality mask or respirator• If you are at a high risk of getting very sick, consider avoiding non-essential indoor activities in public where you could be exposed.

County COVID risk levels can be checked at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/covid-by-county.html>. Levels are updated weekly.

Because the LGUHS service population is 3-5 years old and can be considered vulnerable, LGUHS will use COVID Community Risk Levels as well as guidance from the Lake and Geauga Health Districts, ODJFS, ODE, the actions of other local school districts actual incidents of COVID within our centers, staff and families to determine operations during a time of medium to high risk. If it is determined that in-person services are posing a high risk to children, staff and families, services will be provided remotely until such a time that it is deemed safe to return to centers.

VACCINATION

Vaccination is still the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. All Head Start employees, contractors and regular volunteers are encouraged to get fully vaccinated and stay up to date on vaccinations against COVID. Employees, contractors, volunteers are not currently required to provide proof of vaccination status.

Staff may schedule their vaccine appointment during work hours, if necessary, and will be given up to an hour to attend the appointment and return to work without using sick or personal time. If an employee experiences side effects that make it impossible for them to report to work, they are able to take up to 2 days without using sick or personal time. It is preferable that employees schedule vaccine appointments on Thursdays or Fridays, when possible, to allow several days for rest following the shot.

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The CDC is now also recommending vaccinations for children over the age of 6 months. Getting children and teens vaccinated against COVID-19 can help keep them from getting really sick if they do get COVID-19. Vaccinating children can also help relieve the strain on families by providing greater confidence in children participating in childcare, school, and other activities. More information can be found at this link: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/recommendations/children-teens.html#:~:text=CDC%20recommends%20COVID%2D19%20vaccines,with%20their%20COVID%2D19%20vaccines.>

Anyone in need of more information about vaccines can go to <https://www.lcghd.org/2019-novel-coronavirus-ncov/> or <http://gphohio.org/Top-News-Alerts> to find information and local vaccination opportunities.

STAYING HOME WHEN SICK

Staying home when sick can lower the risk of spreading infectious diseases, including COVID-19, to other people. Staff, children, volunteers or contractors who have symptoms of respiratory or gastrointestinal infections, such as cough, fever, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, should stay home. Testing is recommended for people with symptoms of COVID-19 as soon as possible after symptoms begin. People who are at risk for getting very sick with COVID-19 who test positive should consult with a healthcare provider right away for possible treatment, even if their symptoms are mild.

MANAGEMENT OF CASES AND EXPOSURES

Students or staff who come to school with symptoms or who develop symptoms while at school should be sent home and should wear a mask until they are able to leave. They should be encouraged to take a COVID test and may request a test from LGUHS, if necessary.

Isolation and Quarantine should follow the CDC guidelines below:

(<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/your-health/isolation.html> for more information)

Day 0	Person is sick or has a positive COVID-19 test
Days 1-5	Person stays home and isolates away from other people to the extent possible.
Day 6	Is the person fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication? AND is the person free of symptoms or symptoms improved? AND is the person able to consistently wear a mask in the ECE program? • YES: Return to the ECE program and wear a mask for the next 5 days. • NO: Continue to days 6–10
Days 6-10	It is safest to continue isolation until the end of day 10. • For individuals who have symptoms, continue isolation until they are fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved.

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• For individuals who were severely ill, or whose fever persists past day 10, consult a healthcare professional before returning to the ECE program.• After day 10, return to the ECE program.
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OR

Day 0	Person has known or suspected exposure to COVID.
Days 1-5	Person wears a mask, isolates as possible and gets tested for COVID on day 5. If test is negative, resume normal activities. If test is positive, follow isolation and masking timeline above.

If any of the LGUHS locations experiences a COVID outbreak, additional strategies may be implemented, including mandatory masks, increased cleaning and disinfecting, screening testing and closures of classrooms or buildings.

TRAVEL

Staff and families should follow current CDC travel guidelines and alerts when traveling in or out of the United States. Current travel guidelines can be found at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html#can-i-travel>.

STRATEGIES FOR EVERYDAY OPERATIONS

VENTILATION

- When possible, windows will be opened to allow fresh, outdoor air in, including on buses.
- When possible, air conditioners or fans will be utilized to increase air circulation.
- When possible and appropriate, activities will be conducted outdoors to allow for fresh air.

HANDWASHING AND RESPIRATORY ETIQUETTE

- All employees shall wash hands, defined as using soap and water or using hand sanitizer, at the following times:
 - Upon arrival for the day, after breaks and upon returning from outside.
 - After toileting or assisting a child with toileting.
 - After each diaper change or pull-up change.
 - After contact with bodily fluids or cleaning up spills or objects contaminated with bodily fluids.
 - After cleaning or sanitizing or using any chemical products.
 - After handling pets, pet cages or other pet objects that have come in contact with the pet.
 - Before eating, serving or preparing food.
 - Before and after completing a medical procedure or administering medication.
 - When visibly soiled (must use soap and water).

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- Children shall wash hands, defined as using soap and water or using hand sanitizer at the following times:
 - Upon arrival for the day.
 - After toileting/diaper change.
 - After contact with bodily fluids.
 - After returning inside after outdoor play.
 - After handling pets, pet cages or other pet objects that have come in contact with the pet before moving on to another activity.
 - Before eating or assisting with food preparation.
 - After water activities.
 - When visibly soiled (must use soap and water).

- Permanent and/or portable sinks as well as hand sanitizer stations will be located throughout the buildings.

- Staff will practice appropriate respiratory etiquette, which includes:
 - Covering mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze, and throwing used tissues in the trash, or
 - If a tissue isn't available, coughing or sneezing into an elbow, not hands.
 - Washing hands immediately after blowing nose, coughing or sneezing.

CLEANING AND DISINFECTING

Keeping sites clean is the responsibility of all staff. Staff should wear gloves when cleaning and disinfecting surfaces. Gloves should be discarded after each cleaning. Classroom cleaning checklists will continue to be used with additional attention on COVID protocols.

Hard (non-porous) Surfaces

- All surfaces must be cleaned and disinfected every day.
- If surfaces are visibly dirty, they should be cleaned with soap and water prior to disinfection.
- Tables and chairs will be disinfected after each use.
- High traffic, shared areas like door knobs, railings, sinks, toilets, stall doors, etc. will be cleaned multiple times per day.
- Toys, manipulatives, classroom supplies will be sanitized in the ZONO cabinet once per day.

Soft (porous) Surfaces

- Carpeted floors or other soft surfaces will be cleansed using steam or electrostatic spray as needed.
- Stuffed animals, dolls, dress up clothes, etc. will be sanitized daily in the ZONO sanitizing cabinet.

Electronics

- Electronics such as cell phones, tablets, keyboards or screens will be wiped with alcohol wipes or sanitized using UV light daily.

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Linens

- Disposable paper towels or cloths will be used for cleaning whenever possible.
- Blankets, if needed, will be washed or sanitized regularly.
- When linens are used, they will be laundered after every use.

Buses

- Buses and harnesses will be cleaned between routes, if applicable, using electrostatic sprayer and/or UV light.
- Buses will be sprayed with an electrostatic sprayer disinfectant at least once per week when not in use.

Large Areas

- Classrooms, common areas and buses will be sprayed with an electrostatic sprayer disinfectant when children are not present.
- If there is a positive COVID test within the program, affected areas will be sprayed that day and may be closed to accommodate thorough cleaning.

MASKING

- Program-wide mask requirements will depend on the current CDC Risk Level in each county, current recommendations from the local Health Districts and/or current practices in the local schools.
- Program-wide mask requirements may change based the numbers of cases in our centers, the number of immunocompromised individuals in a classroom, or other factors specific to each location.
- Children or staff following CDC procedures or exercising personal preference, may wear masks at any time.

REPORTING

- All positive COVID staff or child cases will be reported to the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, pursuant to licensing regulations. LGUHS will also report high rates of positive cases of COVID in either children or staff to the local Health District in the appropriate county in accordance with applicable privacy laws.
- Any center or program closures resulting in an extended gap in services or transition to virtual provision of services will be reported to the Office of Head Start via the Head Start Enterprise System.

COMMUNICATION

- Approved COVID policies and procedures will be provided to staff and families electronically. Staff and families may request a hard-copy of the current COVID policies and procedures at any time. Current COVID policies and procedures will be maintained in each center office.

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- Positive COVID cases within a classroom or bus route will be communicated via phone call or text message to parents so they can monitor their child(ren) for symptoms and begin isolation procedures if necessary.
- Significant changes to community conditions or COVID protocols will be communicated to staff and families immediately (pending approval, if necessary).
- Parents or staff with questions are encouraged to ask their Family Advocates, Site Administrators, Health Coordinator or Executive Director for information.
- Parents and staff are also encouraged to visit the links withing this policy to find current COVID information nationally, statewide and in our service area.

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