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Neck of the Woods Covid-19 Prevention Policy & Test to Stay Program

Neck of the Woods is committed to providing safe and quality care for children and families. With Covid-19 as an added factor in our lives today we MUST work together to ensure safety and prevent the spread of Covid-19. In order to do this we expect all families and our Program staff to follow the health and safety guidelines set by the Vermont State Health Department and our Program in regards to Covid-19.

Because we no longer do health screenings at the start of each day we ask that parents/guardians ensure children who are attending Neck of the Woods are healthy upon arrival. If you are unsure at any time whether your child is healthy enough to attend Neck of the Woods Programming please ask yourselves the following questions:

Has your child been in close contact with a person with COVID-19 in the last 14 days?

Does your child feel unwell with any of the following symptoms:

- Runny Nose
- Cough
- Fatigue
- Headache
- Fever greater than 100.4
- Loss of Taste or Smell
- Difficulty breathing
- Sore Throat
- Congestion
- Nausea/Vomiting/Diarrhea

If the answer to either of these questions is yes, please keep your child home and have them tested for Covid-19 using a PCR test.

Neck of the Woods uses Prevention Strategies

(https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/child-care-guidance.html#anchor_1625771561068) to mitigate the risk of Covid-19 in our facility. These strategies are as follows:

- Promoting vaccination
- Consistent and correct mask wearing
- Physical distancing and cohorting
- Ventilation and air filtration systems in each room
- Handwashing and respiratory etiquette
- Contact tracing in combination with isolation and quarantine

- Cleaning and disinfecting

The most effective ways to reduce the spread of Covid-19 are vaccinations and mask-wearing. Our youngest learners do not have the ability yet to be vaccinated and many of them are not at an age where mask wearing is appropriate. For these youngest learners it is imperative that children and staff come to Neck of the Woods symptom-free. Children and staff with symptoms continue to spread illnesses throughout the Programs, causing families and staff to have to stay home from work/school for longer periods of time, for our Programs to have to close due to staff shortage, and for more people to need to be tested more frequently at a time when testing is not always easily accessible.

What if my child is negative for Covid-19 but still has symptoms?

If a child has subtle symptoms of Covid-19, such as a runny nose, but have tested negative for Covid-19 with a PCR test, AND that child can effectively wear a mask that does not need frequent changing due to constant flow of a runny nose, then they will be permitted to attend programming.

On the flip side, if a child is PCR negative for Covid-19 but has subtle symptoms, such as a runny nose, and the child cannot effectively wear a mask without frequent changes then they must stay home.

As stated on the Vermont Department of Health website:

Staying Home When Sick AND Getting Tested

Children and staff who have symptoms of infectious illness, such as [influenza](#) (flu) or [COVID-19](#), should stay home and be referred to a healthcare provider for testing and care.

Staying home when sick with COVID-19 is essential to keep COVID-19 infections out of programs 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 and get tested.

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, they are different diseases. Children who have symptoms of infectious illness or certain symptoms of COVID-19 should not attend your ECE program. Encourage your families to be on the alert for [signs of illness](#) in their children and to keep them home when they are sick.

- Fever, temperature 100.4 °F or higher, or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose

- Diarrhea, vomiting, or stomachache

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People who have a fever of 100.4 °F (38.0 °C) or above or other signs of illness should not be admitted to your facility.

The length of time the child should stay out of an ECE program depends on whether the child has COVID-19 or another illness. In most instances, those who have COVID-19 MUST:

- Stay home and isolate for 5 days.
- Notify your close contacts that you have tested positive.
- Leave your home after day 5 if:
 - You have two negative antigen tests performed at least 24 hours apart beginning no earlier than day 4.
 - AND you never had symptoms, or your symptoms have improved and you feel better
 - AND you have had no fever for at least 24 hours without the use of medicine that reduces fevers
 - AND you wear a mask around others through day 10, following two negative rapid tests, one on day 4 and one on day 5
- At this time we are unable to have children under 2 use rapid tests effectively and of course they cannot wear masks, which means if a child under 2 tests positive for Covid they MUST stay isolated for 10 days, instead of 5, before returning to care. If further guidance is given in this regard we will update families as soon as we receive it.

What is considered a Close Contact?

Close contact means being within six feet of a Covid positive individual for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period while the person was infectious. A person's infectious period starts two days before any symptoms begin (or for people without any symptoms, two days before the day they get tested) and continues until they are recovered.

Test To Stay

Our Test to Stay Program will begin Monday, January 17th, 2022 for all who would like to participate and will last as long as we are given rapid tests by the State. We are running a preliminary trial of Test to Stay with the following procedures in place.

When it is discovered that a child or staff member with Covid-19 was present in the childcare program during their infectious period, the Program will implement Tests for Tots for close contacts within the childcare program.

Children and Staff Without Symptoms:

1. The program will conduct contact tracing to identify close contacts of the person who is positive and the most recent day those individuals had contact with the person who is positive.

2. Children and staff who are unvaccinated close contacts must go home as soon as possible. 3

3. Close contacts who are 2-5 years old and unvaccinated staff will receive a kit of antigen take home tests to test for up to 5 days from the date of the last exposure to the person who is positive. Example: if the close contact was the day before, the Tests for Tots child/staff will test for 5 days. If the close contact was 3 days prior, the Tests for Tots child/staff will test for 2 days.

4. Close contacts who are ages 6 weeks to 23 months, who cannot participate in Tests for Tots will need to quarantine and take a rapid antigen test on day 4 AND 5 after exposure OR take a LAMP test on day 5 after exposure OR get a PCR test dated on or after day 5 after exposure for the time being. The Tests for Tots program provides guidance that asks Programs to contain close contact groups in this age range as a cohort and continue care when they are close contacts, but until we know if Tests for Tots is effectively used without further spread of Covid-19 we will not be putting this protocol in place with potential that this new protocol could put the youngest of our learners at a higher risk of spread than any of our other cohorts. If Tests for Tots works effectively and the spread is maintained well then we will reconsider beginning this protocol at that time.

5. Close contacts who are 2-5 years old and unvaccinated staff can attend the Program after they have tested using 2 antigen tests 24 hours apart. The first test MUST be taken the morning after they were sent home, the second taken 24 hours later. If the second result is negative they can attend the Program that day AND MUST continue to test daily for the remainder of the five days prior to attendance each day.

6. Children and staff who are testing daily must wear masks while indoors (except when eating or napping) when they are actively participating in Tests for Tots and attending the childcare program.

7. During the time that children and staff are participating in Tests for Tots, they should quarantine while outside of the Program, including nights and weekends in accordance with Vermont Department of Health Guidance.

<https://www.healthvermont.gov/covid-19/symptoms-sickness/what-do-if-you-are-close-contact>

8. Children of families who elect not to participate in the Tests for Tots program must quarantine according to Vermont Department of Health Guidance and cannot use the Test for Tots take home test kits. (see section “If Opting Out of Tests for Tots” on page 5 for further information)

Exemptions for Children and Staff Without Symptoms

- Close contacts who are fully vaccinated (Adults: if their second shot of the primary series was more than 5 months ago, they must have received their booster. Five-year olds: their primary series was completed at least 2 weeks prior) do not need to

quarantine and do not participate in Tests for Tots. They must wear a mask around other people while in the child care program for the next 10 days following the appropriate instructions at Vermont Department of Health Guidance.

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- Close contacts who have had a confirmed case of Covid-19 within 90 days do not need to quarantine and do not participate in Tests for Tots. They must wear a mask around other people while in the child care program for the next 10 days.

Children and Staff with Symptoms

When a child or staff member has Covid-19 symptoms, they must leave the Program as soon as possible and will need to provide proof of a negative PCR test result before returning to Programming. Before returning to Programming, if negative, they must also be symptom-free OR, if recovering from a cold and exhibiting subtle symptoms, such as a runny nose, able to effectively wear a mask without needing frequent mask changes.

If Opting Out of the Tests for Tots (Test to Stay) Program:

If your child is fully vaccinated, they do not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms. Fully vaccinated means 14 days have passed since your child's final dose of vaccine. Consider getting them tested 3-5 days after their exposure date. If your child develops symptoms at any point, seek testing right away, and keep your child at home away from others.

If your child has recovered from COVID-19 within the past 90 days and does not have any new symptoms, they do not need to quarantine or get tested. If they develop symptoms, keep your child at home away from others and contact their health care provider for guidance.

If your child is not fully vaccinated, they need to stay home for 10 days and/or get tested within the timeframe listed below. This is called quarantine. Watch for symptoms of illness during this time.

- Day 0 of the quarantine period is the day your child was last in contact with the person. ● The Health Department recommends getting tested using a PCR test on or after day 5 of exposure OR testing on days 4 and 5 with a rapid antigen test OR testing on or after day 5 with a LAMP test. If the test(s) is/are negative, your child can end quarantine. If the test(s) is/are positive your child will need to quarantine as described on page 3 of this guidance. Watch for symptoms, even if mild, of cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fever, chills, fatigue, muscle pain or body aches, headache, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea. ● Your child should not leave home, except to get medical care.
- Call ahead before visiting a health care provider or emergency department with your child.
- While at home, your child should stay apart from other people in the household, especially anyone who is at increased risk of getting very sick, like people who are older

or have health conditions. Other household members do not need to quarantine unless they develop symptoms.

● **As much as possible, your child should:**

- Stay in a specific room in your home and use a separate bathroom.

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- Stay at least six feet away from others in your home.
- Wear a face mask if they are in any room with other people, unless they have trouble breathing.
- Avoid sharing household items.
- Stay connected with others – you and your child can use technology to communicate with friends and family.

Please call the Vermont Department of Health at 802-863-7240 (option 8) if you have questions or concerns. More information is available at the Health Department website: healthvermont.gov/COVID-19.

