

**NORTHWEST MONTANA HEAD START
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES
CHILD HEALTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL SERVICES**

Policy Number: HS 25	Page 1 of 9
Policy Council Approval: 3-3-23	
Board of Directors Approval: 3-21-23	
Reviewed:	

SUBJECT: Covid-19 Evidence Based Operational Guidance Plan

POLICY: Head Start staff will implement practices designed to help reduce and minimize the transmission of Covid-19 and other infectious diseases through approved practices and continued planning efforts.

THE FOLLOWING PROCEDURES ARE FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THE POLICY. CHANGES MAY BE MADE AT THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMPONENT COMMITTEE AND/OR MANAGEMENT.

The Covid-19 Operational Guidance 2022-2023 document provides guidelines and recommended operational procedures for the mitigation and phases of Covid-19 at Northwest Montana Head Start (NWMTHS). It is designed to help NWMTHS with a consistent approach to implementation and to help with the continued planning efforts for each building. The guide focuses on practices to help reduce and minimize the transmission of Covid-19 and other infectious diseases such as influenza, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV) and norovirus.

PROCEDURES:

Practices to Help Minimize Transmission of COVID-19

To reduce communicable disease risk, it is imperative that we all do our best to follow infection control practices as identified by the CDC and Flathead City-County Health Department (FCCHD), OPI, health organizations and local health professionals in order to reduce and minimize transmission. We should assume that there is potential for community spread of COVID-19 in the Flathead Valley and use every effort to reduce risk of contracting or spreading communicable illness of any kind.

NWMTHS will continue to take an evidence-based approach to protect students, staff and visitors. These mitigation strategies are based on current recommendations from the CDC and other health organizations and include strategies for everyday operations and additional strategies based on community phases:

Evidence Based Covid-19 Phase Guidelines

	Safety and Health Measures	On-site and/or Remote Learning
Phase Zero	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All schools closed to public access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All instruction will be remote instruction
Phase I	<p>Student groups kept together (e.g., students eat lunch and participate in cohorts in their classrooms)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent sanitizing of high touch surfaces ● Non-staff access to schools limited to essential business (eg. deliveries, contractors) and by administrative approval only ● Face coverings are required for staff, students and non-staff ● Health screening/hand sanitizing upon entry ● Handwashing and germ transmission prevention pro-actively taught and frequently encouraged ● All school facilities closed to public rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Families may choose 100% remote learning ● Staff delivering instruction on-site ● Learning may be remote or alternate on-site ● Possible shortened school day/week ● Accommodations will be extended to students and staff who are required to stay home due to medical/COVID related reasons ● No extra-curricular activities
Phase II	<p>Student groups allowed to mix, with gatherings not to exceed 50 students during the school day (e.g., students eat lunch in separate locations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent sanitizing of high touch surfaces ● Non-staff access to schools limited to essential business (e.g. deliveries, contractors) and by administrative approval only ● Face coverings are required for staff, students and non-staff ● Health screening/hand sanitizing upon entry ● Handwashing and germ transmission prevention pro-actively taught and frequently encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On-site instruction returns to 100% with full schedule ● Accommodations will be extended to students and staff who are required to stay home due to medical/COVID related reasons ● Extra-curricular activities such as Family Fun Nights, PCC's resume in compliance with activities limitations on crowd/group size, activity type, and health protocols
Phase III	<p>Students rotate through routines as normal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Frequent sanitizing of high touch surfaces cleaned daily ● Public visitors and volunteers allowed in school ● Face coverings are at the discretion of each individual for health and safety. ● Health screening recommended to be conducted at home prior to arrival and will continue to be conducted upon arrival to your classroom ● Handwashing and germ transmission prevention pro-actively taught and frequently encouraged 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● On-site instruction returns to 100% with full schedule ● Accommodations will be considered for students and staff <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Extra-curricular activities occur with modified guidelines if and as needed

*Changes and updates to the NWMTHS Guidelines may be made based on internal and external data and guidance from but not limited to local, state and national agencies, groups, and stakeholder input. Each center may operate differently within or between phases based on information and guidance.

STRATEGIES FOR EVERYDAY OPERATIONS

- Vaccination
- Staff and students staying home when not feeling well
 - Returning to school after being ill or sick
 - Ventilation
 - Handwashing
 - Environmental Cleaning and disinfecting

Vaccination

- NWMTHS will share with staff and families' information from local providers on vaccine availability and vaccine opportunities
- Vaccines can be obtained through local pharmacies and the County Health Department
- Consult your medical provider to find out if the vaccine is right for you

Staff and students staying home when not feeling well

- Students and staff feeling ill will adhere to the NWMTHS sick policy (Exclusion Guidelines for Sick Children, HS 02)
- Follow CDC guidelines

Returning to school after being ill or sick

- Students and staff feeling ill will adhere to the NWMTHS sick policy (Exclusion Guidelines for Sick Children, HS 02)
- Follow CDC guidelines

Ventilation

- Increase circulation of outdoor air by ensuring outdoor air exchange through air handlers are functioning properly throughout classrooms and by opening windows and doors when feasible.
- Air purification systems in place and working properly.

Handwashing

- NWMTHS follows the guidance of the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC) Handwashing Procedure 3.2.2.2

Environmental Cleaning & Disinfecting

- NWMTHS adheres to Classroom Hygiene Policy, HS 07
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces in accordance to the; *Daily Classroom Cleaning Roles and Responsibilities* using EPA Early Childhood approved cleaners.

Cleaning Procedures

- Common terms:
 - **Cleaning removes germs**, dirt and impurities from surfaces or objects. Cleaning works by using soap and water to physically remove germs from surfaces. This process does not necessarily kill germs, but by removing them, it lowers their numbers and the risk of spreading infection.
 - **Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces or objects.** Disinfecting works by using chemicals to kill germs on surfaces or objects. This process does not necessarily clean dirty surfaces or remove germs, but by killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.
 - **Sanitizing lowers the number of germs on surfaces or objects to a safe level**, as judged by public health standards or requirements.

***Bleach Solutions are effective for disinfection up to **24 hours**. New solutions will need to be made each day upon arrival at the center. ***

STRATEGIES BASED ON COMMUNITY LEVELS

- Face coverings
- Screening and testing

Face coverings

- Face coverings are at the discretion of each individual for health and safety. 3 types of face coverings may include disposable masks, cloth face masks, multilayered 'Buffs'/gaiters as long as they securely cover the nose and mouth.

Screening and testing

- Flathead County Health Department provides information from local providers on testing opportunities in the Flathead Valley.
- Call Flathead County Health Department's COVID-19 Line at 406-751-8250 for further guidance.

CDC STRATEGIES AND GUIDELINES

- What to do if you were exposed to COVID-19
 - When to isolate?
 - Isolation
 - Ending isolation
 - Regardless when you end isolation

If you were exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19 or have been told by a healthcare provider or public health authority that you were exposed, here are the steps that you should take, *regardless of your vaccination status or if you have had a previous infection.*

After Being Exposed to COVID-19



START PRECAUTIONS

Immediately

Wear a [mask](#) as soon as you find out you were exposed

Start counting from Day 1

- Day 0 is the day of your last exposure to someone with COVID-19
- Day 1 is the first full day after your last exposure



CONTINUE PRECAUTIONS

10 Full Days

You can still develop COVID-19 up to 10 days after you have been exposed

Take Precautions

Wear a high-quality [mask](#) or respirator (e.g., N95) any time you are around others inside your home or indoors in public¹

- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask. For travel guidance, see CDC's [Travel](#) webpage.

Take [extra precautions](#) if you will be around people who are [more likely to get very sick from COVID-19](#).

[More about how to protect yourself and others >](#)

Watch for symptoms

- fever (100.4°F or greater)
- cough
- shortness of breath
- [other COVID-19 symptoms](#)

If you develop symptoms

- [isolate immediately](#)
- [get tested](#)
- stay home until you know the result

If your test result is positive, follow the [isolation recommendations](#).



GET TESTED

Day 6

Get tested at least 5 full days after your last exposure

Test even if you don't develop symptoms.

If you already had COVID-19 within the past 90 days, see [specific testing recommendations](#).



IF YOU TEST

Negative

Continue taking precautions through day 10

- Wear a high-quality mask when around others at home and indoors in public

You can still develop COVID-19 up to 10 days after you have been exposed.



IF YOU TEST

Positive

[Isolate immediately](#)

*About negative test results

As noted in the Food and Drug Administration labeling for authorized over-the-counter antigen tests, negative test results do not rule out SARS-CoV-2 infection and should not be used as the sole basis for treatment or patient management decisions, including infection control decisions.

When to isolate?



When to Isolate

Regardless of vaccination status, **you should isolate from others when you have COVID-19.**

You should also isolate **if you are sick and suspect that you have COVID-19 but do not yet have [test](#) results.** If your results are positive, follow the full isolation recommendations below. If your results are negative, you can end your isolation.



IF YOU TEST

Negative

You can end your isolation



IF YOU TEST

Positive

Follow the full isolation recommendations below

When you have COVID-19, isolation is counted in days, as follows:

If you have no symptoms

- **Day 0 is the day you were tested** (not the day you received your positive test result)
- **Day 1 is the first full day** following the day you were tested
- If you develop [symptoms](#) within 10 days of when you were tested, the **clock restarts at day 0 on the day of symptom onset**

If you had symptoms

- **Day 0 of isolation is the day of symptom onset**, regardless of when you tested positive
- **Day 1 is the first full day** after the day your [symptoms](#) started

Isolation



Isolation

If you test positive for COVID-19, **stay home for at least 5 days and isolate from others in your home.**

You are **likely most infectious during these first 5 days.**

- [Wear a high-quality mask](#) if you must be around others at home and in public.
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask. For travel guidance, see CDC's [Travel webpage](#).
- [Do not travel](#).
- Stay home and separate from others as much as possible.
- Use a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Take steps to [improve ventilation](#) at home, if possible.
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils.
- Monitor your [symptoms](#). If you have an [emergency warning sign](#) (like trouble breathing), seek emergency medical care immediately.
- Learn more about [what to do if you have COVID-19](#).

Ending Isolation



Ending Isolation

End isolation based on how serious your COVID-19 symptoms were. Loss of taste and smell may persist for weeks or months after recovery and need not delay the end of isolation.

If you had no symptoms

You may end isolation after day 5.

If you had symptoms and:

Your symptoms are improving

You may end isolation after day 5 if:

- You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication).

Your symptoms are not improving

Continue to isolate until:

- You are fever-free for 24 hours (without the use of fever-reducing medication).
- Your symptoms are improving.¹

If you had symptoms and had:

Moderate illness (you experienced shortness of breath or had difficulty breathing)

You need to isolate through day 10.

Severe illness (you were hospitalized) or have a weakened immune system

- You need to isolate through day 10.
- Consult your doctor before ending isolation.
- Ending isolation without a viral test may not be an option for you.

If you are unsure if your symptoms are moderate or severe or if you have a weakened immune system, talk to a healthcare provider for further guidance.

Regardless of when you end isolation

Until at least day 11:

- Avoid being around people who are more likely to get very sick from COVID-19.
- Remember to wear a high-quality mask when indoors around others at home and in public.
- Do not go places where you are unable to wear a mask until you are able to discontinue masking (see below).
- For travel guidance, see CDC's [Travel webpage](#).



Removing Your Mask

After you have ended isolation, when you are feeling better (no fever without the use of fever-reducing medications and symptoms improving),

- Wear your mask through day 10.

OR

- If you have access to antigen tests, you should consider using them. With two sequential negative tests 48 hours apart, you may remove your mask sooner than day 10.

Note: If your antigen test results¹ are positive, you may still be infectious. You should continue wearing a mask and wait at least 48 hours before taking another test. Continue taking antigen tests at least 48 hours apart until you have two sequential negative results. This may mean you need to continue wearing a mask and testing beyond day 10.

After you have ended isolation, if your COVID-19 symptoms recur or worsen, restart your isolation at day 0. Talk to a healthcare provider if you have questions about your symptoms or when to end isolation.

Resources and Guidance Documents

Governor's Plan for Reopening Safe and Healthy Schools for Montana
Reopening Montana Schools Guidance (MT, OPI)

Flathead City-County Health Department Guidance

CDC: The Importance of Reopening America's Schools this Fall

Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECKLES)
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>

COVID-19 Planning Considerations: Return to In-person Education in Schools, American
Academy of Pediatrics

School Reentry Considerations Supporting Student Social and Emotional Learning and Mental
and Behavioral Health Amidst COVID-19, School Counselors Association and National
Association of School Psychologists

*Edited and reviewed by Northwest Montana Heads Start's Health Service Advisory Committee
(HSAC) meeting on 2/16/23

Updated: 04/20/2023