

COVID-19 Mitigation Policy

Head Start of Eastern Orange County, Inc.

This Policy has been created in consultation with the Health Services Advisory Committee to comply with ACF-PI-HS-23-01 and the Head Start Performance Standard 1302.47(b)(9). It provides for an evidence based approach of layered strategies to promote a safe and healthy environment for Head Start children, families and staff. Additionally, this Policy can be scaled up or down in consideration of community risk status in consultation with National, local and State health officials.

Everyday Strategies as a Layered Mitigation Approach

These strategies are effective against many infectious diseases including COVID, Flu, RSV, Norovirus, as well as others, and are implemented on a daily basis.

- Vaccinations
 - Up-to-Date vaccinations are promoted as well as resources on how to access them
 - All staff are required to have COVID-19 vaccinations
 - Staff promote COVID vaccines for families and children and provide resources and assistance to access them
 - Vaccine resources & education provided as needed
- Staying Home when Sick
 - Reference should be made to the Exclusion Policy and NYS DOH and OCFS guidance
 - Families will be provided with information on when to keep children home & a daily health check will be conducted by staff.
 - Children or staff who become ill during the day will be masked and sent home utilizing established protocols
- Ventilation
 - As appropriate air exchangers will be activated, windows opened and outdoor activities will be increased as weather conditions allow
- Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette
 - Washing hands can prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Proper handwashing and covering coughs and sneezes will be reinforced. Hand sanitizers will be available as needed.
- Cleaning and Sanitation
 - Daily cleaning of the facility is conducted. Classroom high touch and work/eating surfaces are sanitized frequently.

Additional Layers to Implement Depending on Community Levels, also in Consideration of Program Attendance or Illness

- Masking
 - The program will support anyone wishing to wear a mask
 - Classroom masking will be implemented, as needed, to protect an immune compromised individual
 - Includes consideration of families who have concerns about at-risk household members

- Masking for all will be determined by community levels of disease in consultation with local health officials
- Physical Distancing
 - As conditions warrant, physical distancing will be accomplished by limiting group contacts and podding small groups of children in classrooms.
 - Large group activities will be limited including parent events and activities
- Testing
 - Children or staff who have been exposed to COVID will be referred for testing to include using a home testing kit
 - Positive cases will follow the most recent guidance for isolation and masking as recommended by local and State health officials

Collaboration & Monitoring Community Levels

- Orange County Health Commissioner will put HSEOC on notification list of communities experiencing increased levels of COVID as they do for school districts and medical facilities
- HSEOC will work closely with local health officials to build upon this plan and to inform other program decisions as needed. For example, clusters of illness will be discussed with the Orange County Health Department to best plan for further mitigation strategies including targeted classroom closures for a specific period of time.
- Staff will monitor recommendations of the CDC, NYS and OC Health Department regarding emerging guidance and COVID community levels

Communication Plan

This Policy will be provided to staff and families via e-mail, website posting, telephone calls and Class Tag. Hard copies will be provided for families as needed. All communications will be provided in the family's primary language.

- Updates to this plan will be communicated to staff and families as necessary
- As needed, new facility signage will be posted or changed, as conditions warrant, to alert families and visitors to revised conditions for entering the Head Start School Building

Consultation with HSAC

- A Draft of this Policy was provided to HSAC members prior to a scheduled meeting for review and discussion purposes
- HSAC met on February 9, 2023 and finalized this Policy which incorporates their input and consultation