



Policy Statement

Preventing the spread of respiratory viruses is a key strategy to protect the health of staff, children, and families. Staff are expected to take appropriate precautions when experiencing symptoms of a respiratory virus to reduce transmission risks in the workplace. Kids Central is moving to align current COVID mitigation and isolation procedures with the updated Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance.

Mitigation Strategies

Layering the following mitigation strategies can significantly reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in Head Start and Early Head Start settings.

Health and Hygiene Practices

- **Hand Hygiene:** Implement regular handwashing routines for children and staff, especially upon arrival, before meals, and after restroom use.
- **Respiratory Etiquette:** Teach and reinforce covering coughs and sneezes with tissues or elbows.
- **Sanitization:** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and shared objects daily.

Screening and Response

- **Daily Health Checks:** Conduct symptom screenings for children and staff upon arrival.
- **Isolation Procedures:** Establish protocols for isolating and sending home individuals who develop symptoms during the day.
- **Communication:** Notify families and staff promptly about potential exposures while maintaining confidentiality.



Education and Communication

- **Staff Training:** Provide ongoing training on COVID-19 policies, hygiene practices, and use of PPE.
- **Family Engagement:** Share information with families about mitigation strategies, vaccination opportunities, and updates to policies.

Policy Development and Review

- **Evidence-Based Policies:** Develop and regularly update COVID-19 mitigation policies based on the latest public health guidance.
- **Health & Mental Health Services Advisory Committee (HSAC):** Consult with HMHSAC to review and advise on health and safety policies.
- **Flexibility:** Adapt policies to reflect changes in community transmission levels and emerging scientific evidence.

Respiratory Virus Prevention and Return-to-Work Guidelines

Procedures:

1. Stay-at-Home Guidance:

Staff who exhibit symptoms of a respiratory virus that are not clearly attributable to another cause—such as fever, chills, fatigue, cough, runny nose, or headache — must stay home and avoid contact with others, including household members who are not sick.

2. Return-to-Work Criteria:

Staff may resume normal duties when both of the following conditions have been met for at least 24 hours:

- Symptoms are generally improving, and



- The staff member is fever-free (temperature below 101°F) without the use of fever-reducing medications.

3. **Precautionary Measures Upon Return:**

Upon returning to work, staff are encouraged to take additional precautions for the next 5 days, particularly when indoors and in close proximity to others. These may include:

- Improving air ventilation
- Practicing enhanced hygiene
- Wearing a mask
- Physical distancing
- Voluntary testing

These steps are especially important to protect individuals at higher risk for severe illness from respiratory viruses.

4. **Recurrence of Symptoms:**

If a staff member develops a fever ($\geq 101^\circ\text{F}$) or experiences a worsening of symptoms after resuming work, they must stay home again and follow the same return-to-work criteria:

- Symptoms must be improving, and
- They must be fever-free for at least 24 hours without fever-reducing medication.

Additional precautions should again be taken for 5 days upon return.

5. **COVID-19 Testing and Reporting:**

- Staff are not required to obtain physician confirmation of a positive COVID-19 diagnosis.
- Staff must immediately inform their supervisor if they develop symptoms or begin running a fever before or during work hours.



6. Use of Leave:

Time missed due to respiratory illness, including COVID-19-related symptoms, must be covered by Paid Time Off (PTO) or Unpaid Time Off (UTO), in accordance with Kids Central's policies.

COVID-19 Protocol for Children in Head Start and Early Head Start

Policy Statement:

To ensure the health and safety of all children and staff, Head Start and Early Head Start programs will follow a consistent protocol when a child tests positive for COVID-19.

Procedures

1. Reporting Without Physician Documentation

Center-Based: If a parent or guardian reports that their child has tested positive for COVID-19 without physician confirmation, the child shall remain at home for a minimum of **48 hours** from the time the report is communicated to the child's teacher.

Home-Based: If a parent or guardian reports that their child has tested positive for COVID-19 without physician confirmation, the home visitor shall remain out of the home for home for a minimum of **48 hours** from the time the report is communicated to the child's teacher. Children may resume home visits, socializations and field trips after 48 hours and meet the return to school criteria.

2. Reporting With Physician Documentation

Center-Based: If a child tests positive for COVID-19 and the result is accompanied by physician documentation, the child shall follow the medical guidance provided by the physician. However, the child is still required to remain at home for **no less than 48 hours**, regardless of the physician's instructions.



Home-Based: If a child tests positive for COVID-19 and the result is accompanied by physician documentation, the child shall follow the medical guidance provided by the physician. However, the home visitor is still required to remain out of the home for **no less than 48 hours**, regardless of the physician's instructions. Children may resume home visits, socializations and field trips after 48 hours and meet the return to school criteria.

3. Return to School Criteria:

In all cases, the following conditions must be met before a child may return to school or resume home visits:

- The child must be **fever-free for at least 24 hours** without the use of fever-reducing medications. A fever is defined as a temperature of 100.4 or above.
- There must be **noticeable improvement in COVID-19-related symptoms**.

4. Classroom Operations:

Classrooms with a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 will typically remain open. However, decisions regarding classroom closures or additional precautions will be made **on a case-by-case basis**, taking into account the specific context and in consultation with health professionals, as needed.

Employees' Responsibilities:

Employees are responsible for following the policies and procedures as outlined. Health Specialists will be available to support staff and families enrolled in the center or home-based option.

Supervisor's Responsibilities:

Supervisors are responsible for ensuring the ongoing professional development of staff and that the appropriate policies and procedures are followed.



Conduct and Violations:

Any violations of this policy will be considered a serious offense subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

Professional Development:

Kids Central's Human Resources Specialist will provide training on this policy during orientation.