

Community Action Pioneer Valley Head Start & Early Learning Programs COVID-19 Protocols as of June 26, 2023

HS & ELP is required by the Office of Head Start to follow the strictest of regulations from the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), Office of Head Start, and the Center for Disease Control (CDC). HS & ELP protocols meet or exceed all minimum requirements and guidance. All staff must become familiar with and follow agency and program COVID-19 protocols and all changes to these protocols as they arise. We are committed to basing our protocols on the best available data and guidance and we are committed to carrying forward our culture of health and safety.

Table of Contents

Changes to our Daily Practices.....	2
Before Entering the Learning Environment.....	2
Communication & Orientation.....	2
Screening & Monitoring Children.....	2
Screening & Monitoring Staff.....	2
Transportation.....	2
In the Learning Environment.....	4
Reducing Contact Between Groups.....	4
Daily Practices.....	4
Direct Support Services and Volunteers (IFSP/IEP, Specialists, Contractors, Outside Providers, Volunteers) ..	4
Vaccine Requirements and Exemptions for Staff.....	4
Personal Protective Equipment & Cleaning Practices to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19.....	4
Medication Administration.....	6
When Someone Gets Sick.....	7
Confirmed Illness at a Site.....	7
Staff Returning to Work.....	8
HSELP Additional Resources for Illness (Staff/Children).....	8
Closures & Notifications.....	8
Anticipated Program Closures.....	8
Notifications and Local Board of Health Engagement.....	8
Resources.....	9

CHANGES TO OUR DAILY PRACTICES

BEFORE ENTERING THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Communication & Orientation

- Educators will utilize our COVID-19 Curriculum to introduce children to the COVID-19 strategies in the environment, scaffolding children throughout the early weeks of care to help them to understand and implement COVID-19 and other healthy habits over time.
- Through implementation of our COVID-19 curriculum children will learn about healthy habits and the role of germs in our body and personal protective equipment (PPE). Family Services Staff in collaboration with Educators will partner with families to provide Covid 19 information and to understand the current COVID-19 Protocols.

Screening & Monitoring Children

- Each site has designated staff who are trained to perform health screenings.
- Daily health screens will be completed with the family at drop off through a conversation when the children enter the building. All children will be monitored throughout the day by their educators. Head Start @ Home staff will also have a conversation with the family prior to entering the home.
- If the child fails the health screening, the screener will inform the family the child cannot attend care on this day. The screener will advise the parent to monitor the child's illness and to contact their child's health care provider for the next steps if the symptoms continue.
- Staff will monitor site illness and inform the Health Specialist/Health Manager if there are any exposures, positive COVID cases or any infectious diseases.
- All children need to be symptom free and fever free for 24 hours without fever reducing medication to return (see below for more information)
- See Quarantine and Isolation chart for children who develop symptoms during the day in care and who have a signed parent consent for testing. (See below)

Screening & Monitoring Staff

- Staff will follow CAPV COVID-19 Protocols.

Transportation

Transporting Families

- When transporting families using agency vehicles, masks will be optional when in the vehicle.
- Windows will be kept open, where and when it is safe to do so. Air will not be recirculated.

Transporting Children

- The HS & ELP Transportation Prioritization System will be utilized to determine children most in need of transport.

Daily Health Screening Form

- Children who do not pass the health screening or who appear ill after a visual check will not be transported on that day.
- Prior to boarding, the monitor will verify with the parent that the child is symptom free.
- If a child has had an exposure see below.

Face Coverings/Universal Masking (For additional information, refer to Universal Mask section below.)

- Masks will be optional when on transportation for Drivers/Monitors and Children unless there has been an exposure, or someone has symptoms.

Ventilation

- Windows will be kept open on the bus, where and when it is safe to do so. Air will not be recirculated.

Sanitation

- Drivers/Monitors will keep an adequate supply of tissues, hand sanitizer, facemasks, cleaning supplies and garbage bags inside the vehicle at all times.
- Trash will be emptied, and the interior of the bus will be cleaned and swept daily.
- The interior will be disinfected at least once each day including using an EPA-Registered Product for use against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2 on all high touch surfaces to included but not limited to: Buttons, handholds, door handles, shift knobs, dashboard controls, pull cords, rails, steering wheels, sanctions.
- If soft, porous surfaces are visibly dirty, they must be cleaned using appropriate cleaners and then disinfected using EPA Registered Antimicrobial Products for use Against Novel Coronavirus SARS-CoV-2
- Bleach should never be used on cloth surfaces such as seatbelts and it can deteriorate the fabric.

IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Reducing Contact Between Groups

Mixing may be necessary to ensure continuity of care and to extend program hours. Mixing should be as minimal as possible while meeting program goals. HS & ELP will maintain consistency when mixing groups to the extent feasible.

Daily Practices

- HS & ELP will follow all Standard and Universal Precautions in the learning environments
- We have transitioned back to “family style” meals. However, if there is an increase in risks of illness or COVID 19 exposures the teachers will assist in serving children out of caution. Individual exceptions should be discussed with the Site Director.
- Tooth brushing has resumed. However, if there is an increase in risks of illness or COVID 19 exposures we may temporarily discontinue until the risk is lower.
- Families have returned to entering the sites/classroom for drop off and pick up.
- Masks are optional for all adults in the building & childcare space. All families completing pre-enrollment paperwork will enter the building with a scheduled appointment. If parents are interested in volunteering, they will need to follow CAPV/HS & ELP processes for volunteering and follow federal and State COVID guidelines

Direct Support Services and Volunteers (IFSP/IEP, Specialists, Contractors, Outside Providers, Volunteers)

- HS & ELP will collaborate with the Early Intervention program or Local Education Agency to facilitate delivery of services for children who have an IEP or IFSP.
- HS & ELP will collaborate with all other outside agencies that may be entering the learning environment to ensure delivery of service following HS & ELP protocols.

Vaccine Requirements and Exemptions for Staff

- As of June 26, 2023 CAPV has lifted all vaccination requirements
- Staff are encouraged to provide a copy of their vaccination cards for tracking purposes

Personal Protective Equipment & Cleaning Practices to Reduce the Spread of COVID-19

Universal Masking

- At this time, staff and families will make individual decisions about if/when to wear masks during times of good health. See CAPV protocols
 - Masking is required if you have been exposed or have symptoms at work. See CAPV Protocols
- Mask Wearing: Mask must cover one’s mouth, nose and chin. It can fasten around the ears or back of the head, as long as it stays in place when one talks and moves. Masks with vents or exhalation valves are not allowed because they allow unfiltered breath to escape the mask (can wear a surgical mask over the valve).

Face Shields: Face shields and masks will be worn when administering nebulizers.

Gloves: Follow Universal Precautions and wear gloves when diapering, medication administration, handling food, handling waste and body fluids, and cleaning.

Hand Washing: Any individual who enters a classroom must wash their hands with soap, water, and friction for 20+ seconds upon entry; when coming in from outside activities; before and after eating; after sneezing, coughing or nose blowing; after toileting and diapering; before handling food; after touching or cleaning surfaces that may be contaminated; after assisting children with handwashing; before and after medication administration. and before/after changing gloves.

Cleaning:

- Educators must clean high touch areas a minimum of 1x per day (more is ok)
- Cooks will clean kitchens throughout the day as needed
- Custodians will thoroughly clean classroom and kitchen floors, bathrooms, etc. in the evening
- All other areas of the building are cleaned on a routine schedule, including adult bathrooms and common areas

Force of Nature Sanitizer and Disinfectant: When mixing the product, follow manufacturer’s instructions. Label the bottle (on tape or removable label) with the date so staff will know the solution must be disposed of after 2 weeks and a new bottle mixed. Force of Nature has to sit on the surface for 10 minutes to be effective. Force of Nature has extensive safety testing and the studies show it is safe to use as a sanitizer.

Bleach (sanitizer or disinfectant, depending on the solution). Bleach has to sit on the surface for 1 minute.

Bleach as Disinfectant

8%-9% Bleach	5%-6% Bleach
2 Tablespoons per Quart Room Temperature Water	4 teaspoons per Quart Room Temperature Water
½ Cup per Gallon Room Temperature Water	1/3 Cup per Gallon Room Temperature Water

Bleach as Sanitizer

8%-9% Bleach	5%-6% Bleach
¾ teaspoon Bleach per Quart Room Temp Water	½ teaspoon per Quart Room Temperature Water
1 Tablespoon Bleach per Gallon Room Temp Water	2 teaspoons per Gallon Room Temperature Water

Food Safety: CACFP and EEC regulations will be followed for the preparation of all meals and snacks.

Caring for Infants and Toddlers and the Developmentally Young Preschooler:

- Diapering: Follow HSELP NAEYC Diapering procedures.
- Feeding: Follow HSELP feeding practices.

Ventilation: In order to maximize access to fresh air when indoors, doors and windows should be kept open when the temperature will not be uncomfortably hot/cold and when it does not pose a safety risk. Second floor windows must have the safety mechanism engaged. Air conditioners may be utilized and may be in “fan” mode to move/filter air as an alternative to producing cool air if more favorable. Classrooms and applicable shared office spaces have air purifiers. All air filters are cleaned and replaced on a routine basis as indicated by the equipment used.

Medication Administration

Medical Condition	Required Medication	Protective Measures for COVID-19
Asthma	Metered-Dose Inhaler or Nebulizer when absolutely necessary	Metered-Dose Inhalers with spacers are recommended. Nebulizers will only be used when absolutely necessary, and on a case by case basis. If families cannot provide spacers the program will provide. Staff will wear a surgical mask covering, gloves and a face shield when utilizing a nebulizer. Staff will administer medications in a space away from children or in a separate room unless life threatening.
Allergy	Oral Medication or Epi Auto Injector for child with allergy per MD order	Staff will wear a recommended surgical mask covering and gloves.
Seizure Disorder	Oral or rectal medication per MD order	Staff will wear a recommended surgical mask covering and gloves.
Acute Medical Condition	Oral or topical medication per MD order	Staff will wear a recommended surgical mask covering and gloves.

WHEN SOMEONE GETS SICK

Confirmed Illness at a Site

If a staff member becomes aware of exposure to a communicable illness (including COVID-19), staff will immediately inform their supervisor, who will consult with our Health Specialist/Health Manager. HS & ELP will follow existing processes to communicate to families about illness at the program.

When a Child is Symptomatic, Tests Positive and/or is Exposed to COVID-19

If child is symptomatic		
	➔	
Call the parent or guardian and arrange for the child to go home or child can be tested by HS&ELP staff if parent consent is given and they are over the age of 2 years. For children under 2 years the parent must test the child.	➔	If a child is picked up by parent. Provide parents with a rapid antigen test, while supplies last if proper parental consent has been obtained.
	➔	If a child (over 2 yrs old with consent) is tested by an HS&ELP staff member and is negative with mild symptoms, the child can stay. If the child is positive, follow the steps below.
Inform the parent to get their child tested for Covid if they are not participating in the Test & Stay Option	➔	Families can also contact their child's health care provider for further evaluation
	➔	Program will provide rapid antigen test for any child as available with consent from families
	➔	Note: We will provide rapid antigen tests based on our supply.
Staff will clean, disinfect, and ventilate areas that the ill child occupied.		
If test negative, the child can stay in care if symptoms are mild or return to care once they have been fever free for 24 hours and symptoms have improved.		

If a child tests positive for COVID 19 (Isolate)		
The child will stay home for 5 days		
After 5 days	➔	If they can mask consistently while in care, they can return to care on day 6
	➔	If the child has mild to no symptoms, they can return to care, but if symptoms have not improved, they should remain out of care until symptoms improve and check in with HS&ELP Health Specialist for consultation as needed Children must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to care
If the child cannot mask consistently while in care	➔	Child can test (PCR or antigen) on day 5 or after:
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When test negative (PCR or antigen) and asymptomatic or symptoms are subsiding

		can return to care the day after negative test, returning no later than day 11
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> When test positive, continue isolating until negative test or asymptomatic or symptoms subside through day 10, returning no later than day 11
If the child cannot test (PCR or antigen)	➔	Stay home for a total of 5 days and return on day 6

<i>If a child was exposed to someone with COVID-19</i>		
The child may come to care pending no symptoms		
If the exposure occurred at an HS & ELP site or in the community and the child is asymptomatic	➔	HS & ELP will provide rapid antigen tests with appropriate consent to families for the child to be tested on days 3 and 6.
If child is exposed and becomes symptomatic	➔	Follow above for “If Symptomatic”
Note: A positive test will follow isolation guidance above		

Staff Returning to Work

Staff will follow CAPV protocols. See CAPV Health & Safety Protocols

[Human Resources - CAPV COVID Protocols Table 6.2023.pdf - All Documents \(sharepoint.com\)](#)

HSELP Additional Resources for Illness (Staff/Children)

For a complete list of illnesses and when to stay home, see [HS & ELP Parent Handbook Policies and Procedures](#)

CLOSURES & NOTIFICATIONS

Anticipated Program Closures

- Education Managers, Director of Education, or designee will report program closures to EEC and the Program Director or designee will report to the Regional Office of Head Start.
- Families will be informed by the Family Advocate, the Site Director or designee.
- Staff will be informed by their supervisors or designee.
- See HS & ELP Contingency Plans for Program Closures.

Notifications and Local Board of Health Engagement

- The program will follow all HS & ELP/CAPV protocols in place. If a situation arises that needs further guidance, then a member of the health team will reach out to the local BOH for further guidance.
 - Per HSELP Mitigation Policy any cohort with 2+ positive cases at the same time will be reported to the local Board of Health.

RESOURCES

EEC Regulations:

<https://www.mass.gov/doc/606-cmr-700-regulations-for-family-group-school-age-child-care-programs/download>

EEC Health & Safety Guidance:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/eecs-health-and-safety-guidance-during-covid-19-recovery-for-child-care-providers>

[EEC COVID-19 Resources and Information | Mass.gov](#)

Office of Head Start Resources:

Caring For Our Children Guidance:

[Caring for Our Children | National Resource Center \(nrckids.org\)](#)

CDC Guidance:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html>

[COVID-19 by County | CDC](#)

[Stay Up to Date with COVID-19 Vaccines | CDC](#)

[CAPV Protocol table](#)