

Background

Yale researchers conducted the first-ever large-scale assessment of the risk of working in child care during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their findings show child care programs that remained open throughout the pandemic did not contribute to the spread of the virus to providers – a valuable insight for parents, policymakers, and providers alike.

Importantly, the research revealed that child care programs that stayed open were particularly conscientious in following recommended infection control measures. Over 90% of child care providers in open programs reported employing frequent handwashing and disinfection of surfaces.

As the safety of our students, parents, and staff is our highest priority, Deerwood Academy has established Policies and Procedures to reduce the spread of illness. For the COVID-19 pandemic, we added additional procedures to reduce the spread of COVID, and our team has been highly successful in implementing and utilizing these practices.

Our current concern is that “coronavirus fatigue” may set in among some parents, causing them not to be vigilant and keep potentially COVID-positive children out of the center. Also, as we have observed in our center and studies show, asymptomatic and/or pre-symptomatic spread is less of a concern. (*Links to the two studies are under Resources.*) Therefore, engaging parents on the importance of ongoing vigilance and appropriate precautions is essential.

The following Policies and Procedures are established to keep our centers open throughout the pandemic, and they will continue to change and adapt as we learn more about COVID. As always, we use a wide range of resources, suggestions, and guidance – from governmental agencies, other providers, and our own experience – as we develop policies and adapt the policies for ongoing changes. Over the past 9 months, we have learned that our practices do reduce the spread of COVID in our facilities. Our goal is to keep children and adults who can transmit the disease out of our centers.

Center Practices to Reduce and Limit the Spread of COVID:

Effective strategies utilized to reduce the spread of COVID-19 at Deerwood Academy include:

1. Restricting building access to only those who are working:
 - a. Valeting children at drop off and pickup.
 - b. Limiting facility tours by using Zoom and FaceTime.
2. Modified drop-off and pick-up procedures to include thorough screening:
 - a. We request and expect our parents to comply with monitoring themselves and their children for any symptoms of COVID, including taking their child's temperature BEFORE drop off. We expect to be notified immediately if the child or any person within the household has any signs or symptoms of COVID. This includes any member who has been or will be tested for COVID.
 - b. Staff temperatures are taken upon entering the building.
 - c. Staff are screened for activities or symptoms that might necessitate screening.
3. All persons entering the building either wash their hands or use hand sanitizer.
4. All staff, teachers, and any visitors wear masks upon entering the building.
5. Use of PPE when in contact with bodily fluids, food preparation, or sanitizing.
6. Ventilation practices to keep rooms and the building well aired out include opening windows and doors, when and where appropriate.
7. Utilizing outdoor playgrounds and time spent outside.
8. Limiting direct interactions with children and staff to not longer than 15 minutes.
9. Practicing social distancing when possible.
10. Cleaning procedures within the facility:
 - a. All cleaning procedures have been intensified in the building, including cleaning all surfaces, doors and door handles, telephones, and chairs.
 - b. Cleaning supplies are non-harmful to humans, but are certified to kill COVID.
 - c. If there is an incident of a COVID-positive person, the affected room is closed, thoroughly cleaned, and aired out.
 - d. The toys have been changed for ease of cleaning.
 - e. The cleaning and disinfecting rotations for toys have been increased.

[Policies for Parent and Families](#)

For the safety of our everyone – and to reduce the spread of the virus in the community – our goal is to keep COVID-positive persons out of our facilities. We require and rely on our parents to communicate with us, to use sound judgment, and to keep their children at home if anyone in their family has been exposed to the virus. This includes informing Deerwood Academy of any COVID testing or expected testing within the family.

[Policy Checklist for Families](#)

All enrolled families must agree to, sign and abide by our checklist for the safety of all staff and children.

Polices for Remaining Out of the Center

If, within the last 10 days:

- You or any member of your household has a suspected or confirmed case of COVID-19 (*or has been in close contact with anyone who has*), your child must remain out of the center for 10 days; and
- If you have traveled internationally or traveled domestically from any area which is the subject of travel restrictions under applicable state and local guidance, you must remain out of the center for 10 days.

Within the last 7 days:

- If you or any member of your household has attended a gathering/event (*indoor or outdoor*) where attendance exceeded or which was not otherwise in compliance with state or local guidance, your child must remain out of the center for 10 days. This includes trips to Disney.

If you or your child is exposed to a COVID-positive person (*either within the center or elsewhere*):

- Communicate that information to Deerwood Academy management;
- Remain out of the center and monitor for symptoms for at least 10 days;
- Or, test your child for COVID per your pediatrician's recommendations and return with a negative test.

[Policies for Returning to the Center](#)

Children and staff who are COVID-19 positive are allowed to return to the facility after meeting all of the following criteria:

- At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared;
- At least 24 hours have passed since last fever without the use of fever-reducing medications; and
- Symptoms (*e.g., cough, shortness of breath*) have improved.

Children who have experienced exposures, may return to the center:

- On the advice of your pediatrician, completing the appropriate quarantine period, and providing us with a negative test result for your child.

Children or staff who exhibit symptoms similar to COVID may return to the center when:

- The sick child (*or staff*) is evaluated by a medical provider, tests negative for COVID, and is not known to have had close contact with a case of COVID-19, then they can return 24 hours after resolution of fever and other symptoms.

As a child care provider, we have health and wellness policies to keep all of our children safe from the spread of COVID-19 or any other communicable illnesses that are common to children and adults.

- There are many childhood illnesses that exhibit symptoms similar to COVID, including teething, colds, flus, stomach upsets, and allergies. Some require time out of the center. Please refer to our standard policies.
- We use our best judgment regarding the risk or potential threat of a communicable illness that may or may not be COVID within the current guidance of the CDC, Health Department, and scientific findings.

[Policies Regarding the Payment of Tuition](#)

To meet the financial needs of the center and its staff, we will follow these policies during this time:

- Tuition is due in full even in the event the facility is closed and or hours of operation are temporarily changed.
- If you choose to withdraw your child from the program and not pay, there is no guaranteed spot upon a request to return.
- If you choose to disenroll your child, when you reenroll your child, all enrollment fees will be charged.

[Resources](#)

COVID-19 Transmission in US Child Care Programs:

<https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/147/1/e2020031971?cct=2287>

Study of Household Spread of Coronavirus - December 14, 2020

Household Transmission of SARS-CoV-2:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2774102>

American Academy of Pediatrics Guidance for Childcare: <https://services.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/clinical-guidance/guidance-related-to-childcare-during-covid-19/>

CDC Guidance for Child Care Centers: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-childcare.html#ScreenChildren>

Department of Health Guidance for Child Care Centers: <https://www.myflfamilies.com/service-programs/child-care/docs/Child%20Care%20Provider%20Guidance%208-11-2020.pdf>