



2021 – 2022
Addendum to Handbook:
COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

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Introduction

At Zion’s Hill Preschool Program, the well-being of our children, staff and families has always been our utmost priority. With COVID-19, we are taking extra precautions, and will continue to adjust our protocols as guidance evolves. Our goal is to remain as flexible as possible during this ever-fluid situation, such that we may respond in near real-time to best practices and the needs of our families. As such, our policies and procedures are subject to change. We will not be afraid to ramp up - or pull back - on many of the unique programing ZHPP offers as we keep our eyes on the prize: the health and safety of our community.

We are following all requirements established by the CT Office of Early Childhood, as well as local regulations of the Wilton Public Health Department and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control. For the most up-to-date information pertaining to licensed child care facilities, please see <https://www.ctoec.org/covid-19-news-updates/>.

Please read and review the information included in this addendum to our handbook, and keep it handy for reference. We request that each family acknowledge that you have received and read the school’s policies and procedures specifically related to COVID-19. Acknowledgement affirms that you will abide by all of the requirements detailed in this addendum. ZHPP is YOUR school, and we welcome all suggestions and opportunities to provide an exceptional experience for your family – even (and especially!) during a global pandemic. Together, we can – and will – do our part to ensure a safe and successful school year.

With warmest thanks,
Jessica Joy, Director *On behalf of the COVID Committee*

Zion’s Hill Preschool Program shall admit students of any race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the Preschool. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial assistance programs, and other school-administered programs.

At-Home Health Screening

All staff, children and caregivers must be healthy to enter our grounds. We ask that regular, at-home health screening be incorporated into daily routines. **Prior to arrival each morning, the daily health screen must be completed through the Tadpoles app by 8:45 am.** Before a child is brought to school, please ensure that s/he is not displaying any symptoms of COVID-19. These include, but are not limited to:

- Fever of 100.0F or greater
- Chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing (unrelated to physical exertion)
- Unusual fatigue (e.g., difficult to wake up)
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea, vomiting or diarrhea
- Extreme fussiness

In addition, children must not be administered fever-reducing medication (acetaminophen, ibuprofen) before coming to school. **If fever-reducing medication is administered after midnight, a child is not to be at school that morning,** unless a physician's orders are provided to treat any conditions unrelated to illness (e.g., sprained ankle, swimmer's ear).

WE INSIST THAT ANYONE FEELING ILL STAY AT HOME!!!

Drop-off and Pick-up Procedures

Each class has a designated entrance or meeting place on our grounds for drop-off and pick-up. Staff will sign children in/out each day. Families are encouraged to park in an area closest to their designated meeting place. Non-staff members will not be permitted in the building during school hours.

In-School Health Screening

Contactless temperature checks of all staff and children will be made upon arrival, as well as visual checks for signs of illness, such as cough, difficulty breathing, unusual fatigue or extreme fussiness. If the daily health screen through Tadpoles has not been completed, we will also ask for confirmation that the child, or anyone in the immediate household, does not have a fever, shortness of breath, or cough. If a staff member or child does not pass the initial health screening, s/he will not be permitted to be at school that day, and consultation with a physician should be made.

Illness

If a staff member becomes ill throughout the school day, s/he will be immediately dismissed. If a child becomes ill, s/he will be isolated in a designated room and the family will be notified for immediate pick-up. A staff member will remain with the child at all times. We will discuss a plan for permitted return to school. If a fever is detected during the morning health check or presents throughout the day, and it is subsequently determined that any illness is unrelated to COVID-19, a child or staff member may return 24 hours after symptoms have resolved, is fever-free for 24 hours without the use of a suppressant, and produces documentation from a physician stating that the individual may safely participate in our program. Please see the *Exposure to COVID-19* section for a discussion of illness due to COVID-19.

Mask-Wearing Requirements

Mask requirements

All staff are required to wear a mask at all times indoors unless doing so would be contrary to his or her health or safety because of a medical condition. In such instances, documentation will be required from a licensed medical practitioner. Children aged three and older must wear a mask upon arrival, and we strongly encourage children between two and three years of age to follow this practice. Children aged three and older are required to wear a mask except under the following circumstances:

- A child with a documented medical condition, special health care need, or development need (such as sensory integration) for whom wearing a mask would be contrary to their health or safety.
- A child with a documented disability or special education needs for whom wearing a mask would be contrary to their needs.
- Children are not required to wear masks while involved with certain special education and related services activities, such as speech and language therapy or where lip reading is required. To the extent possible, such services will be provided outdoors or when distance between individuals can be maximized. Staff may remove their mask intermittently to facilitate services.
- Children who are newly enrolled within the past two months and are working toward mask wearing.
- Children who have just turned three years old within the past two months and are acclimating to wearing a mask.

Children between the ages of two and three are encouraged to wear a mask indoors.

Breaks from Mask Wearing

- Children may remove their mask when outdoors as a “mask break”. However, masks must be worn upon arrival to ensure that each child has one available for use throughout the day.
- Children are not required to wear a mask while eating or resting on a cot. During these times when masks are removed, distance between children will be maximized (i.e., maintain at least 3 feet of distance wherever possible).
- Staff are not required to wear masks outdoors. However, masks will be at the ready should a child approach.
- Masks will be required outdoors for staff, children, and caregivers if community transmission rates are considered high in the state (i.e., in the “Red Zone” as determined by the CT Department of Public Health).

Children Experiencing Difficulties with Mask Wearing

Staff will work with children who have difficulty complying with the mask requirement by issuing soft verbal reminders and other gentle means of supporting compliance. Staff will seize upon teachable moments to explain, in a developmentally-appropriate manner, the importance and necessity of maintaining our health and safety. If a child is having difficulty wearing a mask, staff will work with families to develop a plan to support the child so that he/she will adapt. Children will not be disciplined, excluded from ZHPP, or isolated from their peers if he/she is unable to comply with mask wearing. However, if a parent refuses to have their child wear a face mask, continued enrollment in a licensed program, including ZHPP, will not be permitted as this is a violation of a State requirement.

Wearing and Removing Masks

- Hands are to be washed or sanitized before putting on a mask.
- All masks must cover the mouth and nose, and wrap securely around the face. Neck gaiters are not permitted. Similarly, face shields are not permitted, unless used by staff during outdoor learning and distancing is maintained.
- Children’s masks must not be pushed up to the forehead, or pulled down to the chin/neck. Staff may lower masks to the chin while outside, but masks must be at the ready should a child approach.
- Efforts will be taken to encourage the children not to touch their mask when wearing and only handle by the ear loops or ties.
- Efforts will be taken to encourage the children not to touch their eyes, nose, and mouth when removing their mask.
- Hands will be washed or sanitized immediately after removing a mask, and each classroom/outdoor learning center will have a designated spot to place masks during breaks.
- Wherever possible, staff will limit adjusting or touching a child’s mask, but when necessary staff will wash and/or sanitize their hands before and after helping a child with a mask.

- Masks must be clearly identified and labeled to avoid confusion or swapping.
- Families are asked to supply additional masks for their child in case a back-up is needed during the day. Masks must be stored in individually labeled containers or paper bags.
- Disposable masks are acceptable. If cloth masks are used, they must be washed after every day of use and/or before being used again, or if visibly soiled.
- Lanyards pose a strangulation risk, and are only allowed if they easily break apart.

Classroom Cohorts

Our overall objective is to minimize the number of people any one individual may have contact with, and to ensure that each child and staff member is easily accounted for in the event of contact tracing. During core program hours (e.g., 9:00 am to 12:30 pm) classroom cohorts will not come in contact with other groups of children, either outdoors or indoors. Bathrooms will be used by a small group of children from the same cohort at a time, accompanied by a classroom teacher. In limited circumstances, during extended programming (i.e., Early Bird and Afternoon Adventures), a child from one class may be placed with a child in another class. Common areas (e.g., the Movement Room) will only be used by one classroom cohort at a time and will be cleaned in between use. Cubbies have also been arranged to eliminate hallway congestion.

Outdoor Learning Environments

Our spacious grounds will be heavily utilized to maximize outdoor learning experiences. We have dedicated, covered outdoor classroom spaces, with the ability to offer protection from the weather. We will be outdoors daily (unless it is dangerously cold, windy or icy). Please dress the children appropriately each day, with rain or snow gear as needed. To the extent possible, we will also be holding Spanish, music, and yoga outdoors. Each outdoor environment and playground, as well as the Bike Park, will only be used by one classroom cohort at a time.

Enhanced Sanitation and Ventilation

Children and staff will wash their hands upon arrival, and multiple times throughout the day, for at least 20 seconds. Outdoor hand washing stations will be available: one near the garden beds adjacent to the lower playground, one near the garden beds near the upper entrance, and one near the upper playground. Hand sanitizer may also be administered to children when hand washing is not available. Per State regulations, hand sanitizer must be kept out of the reach of children. Please do not send your child to school with sanitizer in a pocket or backpack where it may be readily accessible. Instead, please provide to the classroom teacher directly.

ZHPP follows a daily schedule for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing. High-touch surfaces, bathrooms and playgrounds are disinfected throughout the day, using EPA-approved products. Classroom tables and surfaces are cleaned frequently throughout the day, and any materials that are placed in a child's mouth will be removed and placed in a separate container for cleaning. Only classroom materials that can be readily cleaned each day will be available. All cleaning materials are kept secure and out of the reach of children.

All classrooms are equipped with window fans to draw the air in/out and UV air purifiers to maintain good air flow and circulation. The downstairs and upstairs hallways are also equipped with air purifiers.

Snack and Lunch

Snack and lunch are important components of your child's day, and offer wonderful opportunities for the children to further develop self-help skills (unpacking/packing their lunch, practicing utensil use, cleaning up), as well as self-regulation (staying seated, eating "healthy" items first) and offer tremendous social benefits. ZHPP provides a nut-free snack daily. The children will wash their hands before and after snack and lunch. Snack will not be served "family style", but will be served individually to each child by a classroom teacher wearing gloves. There will be no sharing of utensils or containers. If a teacher assists a child during snack or lunch, s/he will wash their hands before and after.

In the classrooms, multiple tables are available to maximize distancing during snack and lunch. Children will be spaced at tables in pairs or in small groups. Weather permitting, we may also picnic outdoors, either at tables (again with distance maximized) or on the lawn. Please send your child with a filled, reusable water bottle each day for use during snack and lunch.

Early Bird, Afternoon Adventures and Extensions

Whenever possible, Early Bird, Afternoon Adventures and Extensions will be held in the child’s classroom, and will be conducted by one of their regular teachers to maintain cohorts. However, this may not always be feasible. Our overall objective is to minimize the number of people any one individual may have contact with, and to ensure that each child and staff member is easily accounted for in the event of contact tracing. If our ability to cohort is compromised, or if community transmission rates of COVID-19 are considered high in the state (i.e., in the “Red Zone” as determined by the CT Department of Public Health), we will reevaluate the feasibility of our extended day offerings.

During extended days, children are provided an opportunity to rest on a sheeted cot. For any children that rest on a regular basis, a cot will be assigned and labeled with their name. To the extent multiple cots are required on any given day, they will be placed head-to-toe at least 6 feet apart. They will be sanitized and sheets will be washed daily.

If you have any questions or concerns, or would like to discuss the staffing and classroom areas for Early Bird, Afternoon Adventures and Extensions, please contact the office.

Special Events

While we intend to preserve as many beloved ZHPP activities as possible, the COVID-19 landscape may impact our ability to host certain events in a traditional way. These may include:

- Back-to-School Night/Open House
- Field trips for our Four's and Five's
- Special programs/live in-school field trips

- Thanksgiving Feast
- Holiday Sing-a-Long
- Spring Fling Gala
- Social Events

We are committed to providing as many fun experiences as possible for our children and families, and will remain flexible and creative in finding ways to safely uphold our traditions.

Exposure to COVID-19

Close Contacts

If a student or staff member became a "close contact" with a confirmed individual, the ZHPP Director must be notified immediately. **DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL.** The CDC currently defines "close contact" as someone who was within six feet of a person diagnosed with COVID-19 for a total of 15 minutes or more within a 24 hour period starting from two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic individuals, two days prior to specimen collection). Students considered a "close contact" of a confirmed individual must self-quarantine and may return to ZHPP after 10 days if symptom-free, and must produce a negative PCR test result (administered at least five days after the last exposure). Fully-vaccinated staff considered a "close contact" must produce a negative PCR test result (administered at least five days after the last exposure) in order to return to ZHPP.

If any individual of the ZHPP community is tested for COVID-19, for any reason, the Director must be alerted as soon as possible such that we can assess any potential risk of exposure.

Siblings/Family Members of a Close Contact

If a student or staff member at ZHPP has a household member that has been deemed a "close contact" (e.g., sibling, caregiver/babysitter), the ZHPP Director must be notified. To reduce potential exposure within ZHPP, any students or staff considered a household member of a "close contact" must be closely monitored for symptoms of COVID-19, and may not return to school until the "close contact" tests negative at least five days after the last exposure.

Positive Individuals

If a student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19, the ZHPP Director must be notified immediately. **DO NOT COME TO SCHOOL.** COVID-19 must also be reported to the local health department, and the CT Department of Public Health. COVID-positive individuals must isolate for ten days from specimen collection. Upon completion of the instructed isolation period (or once symptoms have subsided if beyond day 10), we will need confirmation that s/he is no longer infectious or symptomatic. Therefore, we require documentation from a physician stating that s/he may safely participate in our program.

The classroom cohort will be closed for 10 days. We will support the health department in contact tracing, and impacted families will be notified of potential exposure. Student, family, and staff privacy will be respected at all times. A determination will be made whether multiple classroom cohorts – or ZHPP – should close for a period of time. This determination will be made through careful and thorough consultation with the local health department, and will be based on the particular facts and circumstances of the exposure.

Notification of Exposure

Families will be notified of an exposure to COVID-19 as soon as practicable. We will contact the impacted class(es) and families immediately via email, and instruct as to next steps. This may include, but is not limited to, a temporary classroom closure, self-quarantine of all “close contacts”, or self-monitoring for symptoms. Once classes directly impacted have been informed, we will then send an email to the entire school community to notify families of the exposure. While specific details will not be shared, impacted classrooms will be disclosed. If the exposure is disclosed to us late in the evening, a text alert will be sent, instructing families to check email for an important notification. We will strive to provide the information as quickly as possible, and appreciate your understanding that it does take some time to assess the facts and circumstances surrounding each exposure. In all instances, however, information will be communicated before the start of the next school day.

Privacy

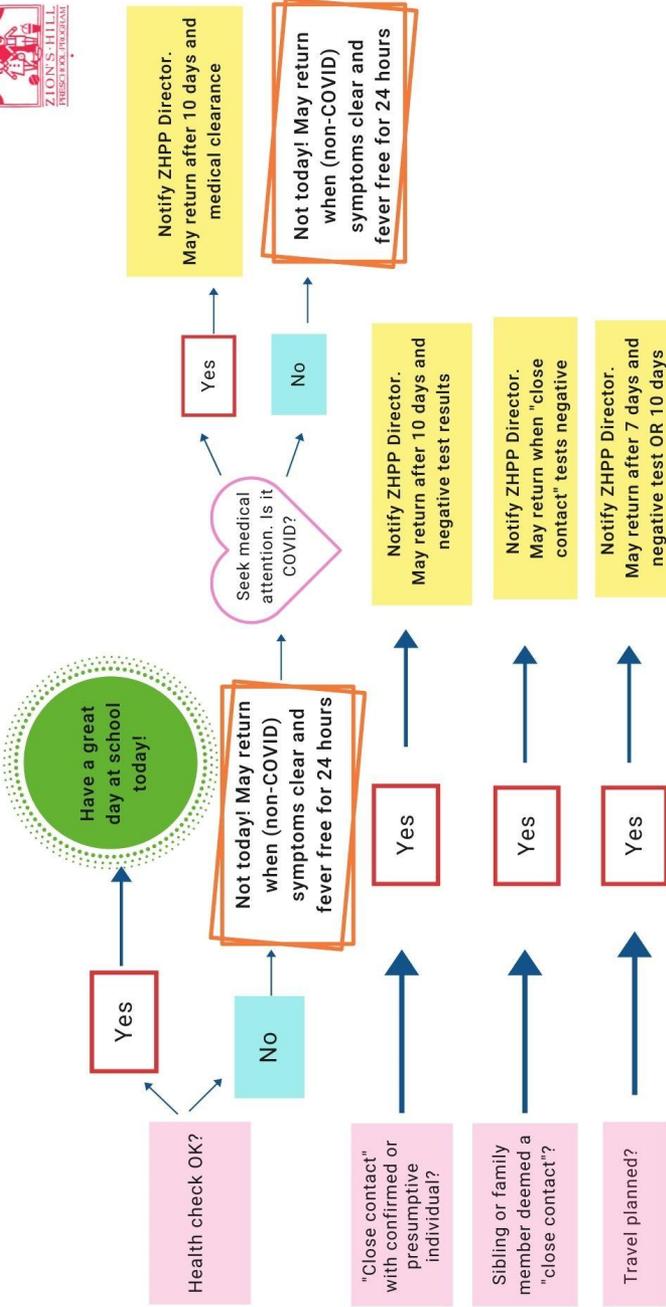
Student, family and staff privacy is respected and safeguarded at all times, including COVID-19 test results and health records. COVID-19 data is used solely for contact tracing purposes, and to ensure compliance with local and state health requirements. Any individual that tests positive for COVID-19 is required to contact their local health department. ZHPP is similarly required to contact the Wilton Health Department, and as part of tracing efforts provides the names and phone numbers of any ZHPP members considered a "close contact". We are also required to notify the Connecticut Department of Health, and provide general information (date of exposure, whether student or staff, etc.), but personal details or identity is not disclosed to the State.

Travel

The State of Connecticut, as well as the local health department, continues to adopt the CDC travel guidance. If an unvaccinated student travels domestically outside of the tri-state area (NY, NJ, CT) for a 24-hour period or longer, or travels internationally, s/he must produce a negative PCR test result (taken 3 to 5 days after travel), AND self-quarantine for 7 days. If a test is not administered, individuals must self-quarantine for a full 10 days. Please notify the Director of any travel plans so that return to school dates may be discussed.

The following diagram illustrates various scenarios in the event of (non-COVID) illness or potential exposure to COVID-19.

Should a Child, Staff Member, or Caregiver be at School?



COVID Committee

This year we are introducing a COVID Committee to assist with ZHPP's policy decision making process. The COVID Committee will evaluate, adjust and communicate ZHPP's overall school policies throughout the year as CDC guidance and COVID-19 infection rates change. The COVID Committee will meet regularly, but will not be evaluating individual cases or address day-to-day COVID inquiries. This Committee consists of a select number of Board of Directors members.



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