



# PARENT INFANT CENTER COVID HANDBOOK



[parentinfantcenter.com](http://parentinfantcenter.com)

## **Table of Contents**

<b>1. Introduction .....</b>	<b>3</b>
A. Purpose of this Handbook .....	3
B. Important Notice .....	3
C. Family Responsibility .....	3
<b>2. COVID-19 General Information .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>3. COVID-19 Monitoring, Reporting, Symptoms and Exposure.....</b>	<b>5</b>
A. Screening, Monitoring and Reporting .....	5
B. Guidelines for Sick or Symptomatic Staff, Families and Children.....	5
C. Quarantine Guidelines for Travel & Indoor Gatherings .....	6
D. Guidelines for Those with COVID-like Symptoms .....	6
E. Staff, Family, or Child with Exposure to a Person who Tested Positive .....	8
F. Guidelines for Staff, Family or Child who Tests Positive for COVID-19 .....	9
G. Home (Self) Tests .....	9
H. Siblings and COVID-19 Exposure .....	9
I. Possible PIC Center Closure Due to COVID-19 .....	9
<b>4. Before Coming to PIC .....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>5. Child Drop-off and Pick Up at PIC .....</b>	<b>10</b>
A. Carpools .....	10
B. Drop-off .....	10
C. Pick-up .....	10
<b>6. Items from Home .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>7. Classroom Life at PIC During COVID-19 .....</b>	<b>12</b>
A. Mask Wearing .....	12
B. Physical Distancing Guidelines .....	13
C. Emotional Needs & Communication with Children & Families .....	13
D. Outdoor Play .....	14
E. Outdoor Walks .....	14
<b>8. Helping Your Newly Enrolled Child Adjust to PIC .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>9. Payment During Self-Quarantine .....</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>10 Resources for Families .....</b>	<b>15</b>

## 1. Introduction

### A. Purpose of this Handbook

The purpose of this handbook is to outline the Parent Infant Center's policies and procedures during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. The handbook relies on the guidance and requirements outlined by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), American Academy of Pediatrics, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), as well as the Philadelphia and Pennsylvania Health Departments. The policies and procedures outlined in the handbook are intended to help reduce the risk of exposure to and spread of COVID-19 at PIC and to provide the safest possible environment for our children, families, staff members and community.

At PIC, we are with children every day who cannot yet be vaccinated, and our youngest children cannot wear masks. Thus, we need to continue our vigilance to do everything we can to mitigate any COVID-19 infections or community spread.

Please note that due to the ongoing and evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the rapidly changing guidance from the CDC, Philadelphia Department of Health and other sources, PIC reserves the right to modify and change the policies outlined in this handbook at any time in the best interest of the Center, its staff and children.

### B. Important Notice

It is important to understand that when your child is present at PIC, they will necessarily be in contact with staff members and other children (and by extension, their families) who are at risk of exposure to COVID-19 in the community. No amount of restrictions, guidelines or policies will eliminate all risk of exposure to COVID-19, as the virus can be transmitted by persons who are not symptomatic and/or prior to showing signs of infection.

### C. Family Responsibility

Each family plays a *critical* role in reducing the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread at PIC by following the practices and procedures outlined in this handbook. ***The importance of open and honest communication between parents/guardians and PIC staff and teachers cannot be overstated during this time.*** We expect that all families will read and follow the directives in this handbook in order to help ensure the health and safety of our children, staff and community.

It is VERY important to notify Executive Director Deb Green at [dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org) and Assistant Director Jessica Carter at [jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org) if anyone in your family has tested positive for COVID 19, or has been in close contact with anyone who has tested positive.

## 2. COVID-19 General Information

### COVID-19 General Information

COVID-19 is a disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus that was newly identified in December 2019. The virus causes primarily a respiratory illness, like a cold or flu. It is mostly spread from person to person through respiratory droplets (i.e. droplets produced by talking, sneezing, spitting, coughing, or blowing your nose) and carried on air currents. The typical symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Children may develop a runny nose, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, new food aversions, or discoloration of their toes. Some people with COVID-19 have body aches, an upset stomach, and/or diarrhea as their primary symptoms. Some people with COVID-19 do not have any symptoms at all. A minority of people with COVID-19 develop breathing difficulties and pneumonia that requires hospitalization.

In children, the risk factors for severe COVID-19 (i.e., pneumonia that requires hospitalization) include: age <1 year old, asthma, diabetes, obesity, immunosuppression, and heart disease since birth. In adults, risk factors include: older age (65 and older), residence in a nursing home/long-term facility, lung disease/asthma, heart conditions, immunocompromising conditions, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease requiring dialysis, and liver disease.

The best way to prevent spread of COVID-19 is through (1) wide-spread **vaccination** (which now includes a booster dose for those 16 and older); (2) **social distancing** (avoiding crowds and keeping yourself at least 6 feet away from others when outside the home); (3) **wearing a mask** when with people who are not in your household; and (4) frequent **hand washing** (with soap and water or a hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol).

There are currently several authorized treatments for COVID-19 depending on the stage at which you present for medical care. Several treatments work most effectively when given early in the course of illness, making it important to quickly seek evaluation and treatment for COVID-19 symptoms.

### **Vaccines**

As of this handbook update, there are currently three FDA-approved COVID-19 vaccines in the US (Pfizer-BioNTech mRNA vaccine, Moderna mRNA vaccine, and Johnson & Johnson vaccine). These vaccines are currently approved for anyone 5 years old or older, including pregnant and lactating individuals. You cannot catch COVID-19 infection from the vaccine, and these vaccines do not affect your DNA. The vaccines do not cause your COVID test to be falsely positive.

It is **highly recommended** that all family members and children receive the vaccine and boosters when eligible. The vaccine is now required for employment at PIC for all those who do not qualify for an exemption and for any outside individuals (contractors, consultants, intervention support persons, etc.) who are inside our facility more than one hour per week.

**We have a 100% vaccination rate among our PIC staff members.**

### **Definitions**

**Close contact:** Closer than 6 feet apart AND for more than 15 minutes over a 24-hour period.

**Exposure:** Close contact with a COVID-positive person anytime between 48 hours before through 10 days after the onset of their symptoms (or before/after their positive test, if they don't have any symptoms).

**Household:** A household consists of people who live in a shared space for an extended period of time.

**Gathering:** Being in close contact with someone who is outside of your household.

**Isolation:** Fully separates people who have tested positive for COVID-19 from others in the household (not sharing bathroom, kitchen, or bedroom) .

**Quarantine:** Separates and restricts people to stay in their household if they may have been exposed to COVID-19.

**Fully vaccinated:** Two weeks after the second mRNA vaccination dose, or two weeks after the Johnson & Johnson vaccination .

**Vaccinated and boosted:** Two weeks after a third (“booster”) COVID-19 vaccine dose (or second dose in the case of the Johnson & Johnson vaccine).

### **3. COVID-19 MONITORING, REPORTING, SYMPTOMS AND EXPOSURE**

#### **A. COVID-19 SCREENING, MONITORING AND REPORTING**

##### **Daily Screening:**

- a. All families and staff members will complete a daily COVID screening questionnaire via text message or email and show the results during drop off. Children and staff members must pass the screening (get a “green screen”) in order to come to PIC each day.
- b. When children are dropped off, the green screen needs to be shown to the teacher who greets your child, either outside or at the classroom door.
- c. If you are not able to complete the daily COVID screening questionnaire, please do not enter the building. Ring the bell and an administrator will verbally ask the screening questions.

##### **Monitoring:**

- d. Families are requested to check the temperature of their child(ren) before coming to PIC each day. Staff members are also requested to check their own temperature before coming to PIC each day.
- e. If you are unable to purchase a thermometer for your home, please notify Deb Green at [dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org) and we will provide one.
- f. PIC administration will develop and maintain an active electronic log of all children and staff members for the purpose of tracking COVID-19 symptoms, exposures, and infections. This data will be reviewed weekly to help guide decisions about operations. **Any decisions to close individual classrooms or the entire center due to COVID-19 are made by the Philadelphia Department of Public Health or in accordance with city, state or federal directives.**

##### **Reporting:**

- g. If you, your child, or a close contact is diagnosed with COVID-19, has contact with someone waiting for test results for symptoms, or is experiencing COVID-like symptoms contact Executive Director Deb Green at [dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org). Please copy Assistant Director Jessica Carter at [jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org) so that we can perform proper contact tracing and mitigation within our facilities. This information will be kept confidential.

- h. It is important that families and/or staff members refrain from disseminating information about potential or confirmed COVID-19 cases with anyone outside of their classroom. This should be considered very confidential information. PIC administrators will coordinate the communication of this information.

## **B. GUIDELINES FOR SICK OR SYMPTOMATIC STAFF MEMBERS, FAMILIES, AND CHILDREN**

*Confidentiality of all health information, including symptoms and COVID-19 testing/diagnosis, must be maintained for all PIC children, staff and family members.*

### **PIC will not allow children, staff members, family members on site if they:**

1. Are showing signs of COVID-19 like symptoms, as **.defined by:**
  - a. **At least one** of the following symptoms: fever (>100.0), new or persistent cough, new shortness of breath/difficulty breathing (above the child's baseline, if for example they intermittently have shortness of breath or coughing from asthma), new loss of taste or smell (usually noticed as aversion to food in young children) **OR**
  - b. **At least two** of the following symptoms: Chills, rigors, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, nausea/vomiting, diarrhea, fatigue, congestion/runny nose.
2. Or have been in close contact with someone outside of PIC who has a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection in the past 10 days (unless the staff member is fully vaccinated, in which case, see directions below).

## **C. QUARANTINE GUIDELINES FOR TRAVEL**

**PIC will continue to follow CDC guidelines regarding travel for *unvaccinated* people (children under 5 years of age.).**

If your child/children travel by plane, bus, or train (outside of local commuting), you must get tested with a COVID PCR test 5-7 days after travel AND stay home and self-quarantine for a full 7 days after travel. Even if you test negative, stay home and self-quarantine for the full 7 days. If your test is positive, isolate yourself to protect others from getting infected.

If your child/children don't get tested, they must stay home and quarantine for 10 days after travel.

## **D. GUIDELINES FOR THOSE WITH COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS**

### **1. COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS AT HOME OR OUTSIDE OF PIC**

**Children or staff members who have COVID-like symptoms (See 4A) must:**

- a. **Stay home**
- b. **Notify PIC by emailing Executive Director, Deb Green ([dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org)) and Assistant Director, Jessica Carter ([jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org)) AND**
- c. **Get a COVID-19 PCR test or a rapid antigen test (see Section D - NOTE ON TESTING below)**  
**OR**  
Have a medical care provider evaluate them and document an alternative diagnosis which does not require the child/staff member to remain home.

Note: If a physician is not able to document alternative diagnosis, PCR/antigen testing is required to return to PIC in less than 10 days.

## 2. COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS DURING THE DAY AT PIC

- a. If a staff member discovers that a child has “COVID-19 like symptoms” during the school day, the child will be taken immediately to the Family Resource room (our designated sick area) or will wait outside with a staff member (if weather permits).
- b. Any staff member who develops COVID-19 like symptoms will go home as soon as possible.

## 3. RETURNING TO PIC AFTER EXPERIENCING COVID-LIKE SYMPTOMS

- d. Children/staff may return to PIC after experiencing COVID-like symptoms if:
  - i. **Initial COVID-19 PCR/antigen testing is negative** and the individual meets the center’s standard criteria for return after an illness (i.e., no fever for at least 24 hours); OR
  - ii. A medical care provider has evaluated the child/staff member and documented an alternative diagnosis which does not require the child/staff member to remain home, and the individual meets the center’s standard criteria for return after an illness (i.e., no fever for at least 24 hours); OR
  - iii. All of the following are true:
    1. At least 10 days have passed since
      - a. the onset of symptoms OR
      - b. a positive test if there are no symptoms ; AND
    2. The individual has been fever-free without use of any fever-reducing medications (e.g., acetaminophen (Tylenol) or ibuprofen (Motrin, Advil)) for 24 hours; AND
    3. Other symptoms (e.g., cough, runny nose) are improving.

## 4. NOTE ON TESTING

PCR tests remain the preferred method of testing for COVID due to their extremely high sensitivity and specificity for detecting COVID infection. It may take several days to obtain this PCR test and/or the results which can result in lost days of childcare and work for PIC families. **As a result, we will accept rapid antigen testing for ONLY the following scenario:**

- **The child or staff member is symptomatic (has fever, runny nose, cough, etc), AND**
- **The child or staff member has NOT been in contact with someone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days.**

The rapid antigen tests have been shown to perform well in symptomatic COVID cases, and thus is a reasonable alternative in this situation. The rapid antigen test CANNOT be used to shorten quarantine after a COVID exposure, clear someone for return to PIC if they have symptoms and have had a COVID exposure, or to evaluate someone who does not have symptoms.

We will only accept rapid antigen tests performed by medical professionals (e.g., at a pharmacy, doctor's office, urgent care center, testing site). We are **not** currently accepting at-home COVID test

results, due to the inability to ensure quality control. (In particular, if a home test is performed suboptimally, you may get a false-negative result which could put PIC staff and children at risk.)

### **E. GUIDELINES FOR A STAFF MEMBER OR CHILD WITH EXPOSURE TO A PERSON WHO TESTED POSITIVE FOR COVID-19**

If a staff member or child **has had an exposure outside of PIC to a person who tested positive for COVID-19**, the individual should **notify** Deb Green ([dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org)) and Jessica Carter ([jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org)) to report the exposure. An exposure needs to be reported if the exposure was:

- Within 6 feet or less for MORE than 15 minutes over a 24 hour period to a person confirmed to have COVID-19, *and*
- This exposure occurred anytime between **48 hours before through 10 days after** the onset of the COVID-positive person's symptoms (or positive test, if no symptoms).

**After first learning about the exposure, we encourage all exposed individuals to seek out testing immediately to determine if you have been infected (regardless of symptoms).** Though the typical incubation period ranges between 1-5 days (so you may have COVID even if you test negative before day 5), it is worth determining on that first day whether you have already been infected. If your first test is negative, then we recommend the next steps described below.

**FOR NON-HOUSEHOLD EXPOSURES** (*i.e., The person who tested positive for COVID does NOT live with the PIC child or staff member.*) **THIS INCLUDES ALL CLASSROOM EXPOSURES.**

1. **If the exposed person is NOT fully vaccinated**
  - a. Stay home for 10 days without testing OR
  - b. Stay home for 7 days and can return to PIC on day 8 with a negative COVID PCR test that was done on days 5-7. (Only a PCR test is acceptable in this scenario.)

*Note, this guidance has been updated to include the option of returning to PIC on day 8 if a negative COVID PCR test is obtained.*

2. **If the exposed person is fully vaccinated**
  - a. No need to quarantine and can come to PIC
  - b. Must obtain a PCR test between days 5-7 (Again, only a PCR test is acceptable in this scenario.)

**\*\*\* FOR HOUSEHOLD EXPOSURES** (*i.e., The person who tests positive for COVID lives with the PIC child or staff member.*):

1. **If the exposed person is NOT fully vaccinated**
  - a. Stay home for 10 days OR
  - b. Stay home for 7 days and can return to PIC on day 8 with a negative COVID PCR test that was done between days 5-7.

*Note, this guidance is the same as for non-household contacts.*



## 2. If the exposed person is **fully vaccinated**

- a. Stay home for 5 days AND
- b. Obtain a COVID PCR test between days 5-7.
- c. If the PCR test is negative, they can return when the negative test is received.

*Note, this guidance involves the need for home quarantine due to the very high rates of COVID transmissions within households.*

*\*\*\*PDPH guidance says "household contacts may require further investigation, by either PDPH or school officials, to determine dates of quarantine." It has been shown that when one household member has COVID, the other people in that household are much more likely to develop COVID, even if vaccinated. As a result, separate guidelines are in place for household exposures.*

## **F. GUIDELINES FOR A STAFF MEMBER, FAMILY MEMBER, OR CHILD WHO TESTS POSITIVE FOR COVID-19**

PIC administrators will report all PIC enrolled children and staff members with positive COVID tests to the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) and will follow their instructions about contact tracing and need for closure.

If a child or staff member at PIC develops COVID-19 infection and was at PIC during their contagious period, then those children/staff who were exposed will need to quarantine as outlined in Section E). This may lead to the closure of one or more classrooms.

For both vaccinated and unvaccinated persons

### **1. If the person who tests positive has no COVID symptoms:**

*Return to PIC 10 days after the COVID test date*

### **2. If the person who tests positive has COVID symptoms:**

- a. *Return to PIC 10 days after the symptoms first appeared AND*
- b. *24 hours of no fever and no fever reducing medication*

**3. If the person tests positive for COVID-19, and they develop severe COVID-19 infection (requiring admission to the hospital) or are immunosuppressed, they should:**

- c. *Return to PIC 20 days after the symptoms first appeared AND*
- d. *24 hours of no fever and no fever reducing medication*

## **G. HOME (SELF) TESTS**

We understand that access to PCR testing, as well as access to home kits can be very challenging right now. We understand that individuals are taking home tests while awaiting PCR tests and that understanding the results can be challenging. Below are some of the challenges we have recently faced and the protocols that we will be following.

- **For an individual with symptoms and a home test with a positive result (while awaiting a PCR test):**. We assume this is a true positive test and follow all guidelines for an individual who has tested positive for COVID.

- **For an individual with symptoms who has a home test with a negative result:** A PCR/ antigen test will be needed in order to rule out COVID infection.
- **For an individual without symptoms who has a home test with a positive result followed by a negative PCR test:**

*Two negative PCR tests, collected at least 24 hours apart, are needed in order to determine that the home test was a false positive. If two negative PCR tests are documented, then the individual may follow guidelines for a negative test result.*

## **H. SIBLINGS AND COVID EXPOSURE**

- If a child has a sibling who has tested positive** for COVID, the child must quarantine as outlined in Section E (for household contacts).
- If a child's classroom has a teacher or a child who has tested positive**, the sibling may come to PIC, provided they or their sibling does not have symptoms or confirmed COVID-19. If the sibling or child does have symptoms, then the child must quarantine while awaiting COVID testing. (see page 6).
- If a child has COVID-like symptoms and is awaiting testing**, the sibling must stay home until the negative test result is received.

## **I. POSSIBLE CENTER CLOSURE OF PIC DUE TO COVID**

PIC will work with the Philadelphia Department of Health to decide if/when closure of the Center is appropriate or required.

## **4. BEFORE COMING TO PIC**

- **All children will need to have (1) an updated Health Appraisal Form (within 6 months for children under one year of age and within 1 year for children one and older) and (2) an updated Emergency Contact Form (within 6 months) before coming to PIC.** All vaccine information must be entered on the Health Appraisal Form, and the form needs to be signed and dated by your medical provider. No child may come to PIC without these updated forms. The forms are available on PIC's website.
- COVID-19 vaccination must be reported to Deb Green and Jessica Carter, with a copy of the individual's vaccination card or with documentation of the vaccination on a doctor's Health Appraisal Form.
- **The importance of open and honest communication between parents/guardians and PIC cannot be overstated during this time.** For the health and safety of our full community, we ask that you notify PIC if your child, or family member is diagnosed with COVID-19 so that we can perform proper contact tracing and mitigation of our facilities if necessary. This information will also allow us to keep track of any potential trends in COVID-19 infection that impact PIC. Please contact Deb Green at [dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:dgreen@parentinfantcenter.org) and Jessica Carter at [jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org](mailto:jcarter@parentinfantcenter.org).

## 5. CHILD DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP PROCEDURES

### A. Carpools

Recommendations taken directly from the Philadelphia Department of Public Health:

- a. For staff and children who must use carpools, we encourage all riders other than children over 2 years to wear masks if the car will include individuals who do not live together.
- b. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol before and after entering the vehicle.
- c. Limit the number of passengers in the vehicle to only those necessary. If possible, passengers should sit as far as possible from the driver, such as in the rear seat diagonally across from the driver.
- d. **Improve ventilation by opening the windows** or setting the air ventilation/air conditioning on non-recirculation mode.
- e. Store all children's personal car seats or strollers out of children's reach since these surfaces may be contaminated. Strollers used by the school for walks should be wiped down with disinfectant between use.

### B. Drop-off Procedures

We are continuing with our staggered drop-off and pick-up schedule to prevent crowding in the hallways, and to help us with classroom coverage schedules. **We ask that all families keep to their scheduled drop-off and pick-up times.**

Families are issued two FOBs each. When arriving at the drop-off location, we ask that families use the hand sanitizer that is available in front of each entrance.

A health screening questionnaire survey will be sent to each family via text each morning. Without the green screen, or permission from an administrator to enter the building after successfully answering the screening questions, the child will need to return home.

As of August 2021, parents may enter the buildings during their designated drop-off and pick-up time. If the class is inside during morning drop-off, children should be taken directly to their classroom. If the class is on the Nature Playground, children should be dropped-off at the gate to the playground. If the class is in the Sandbox area (behind the Nature Playground,) the drop-off person may enter the playground with their child, walk behind the climbing structure and drop their child off at the gate to the sandbox area.

When going to the classroom, parents will drop off outside of their child's classroom and are not permitted into the classroom during this time.

**Drop-off persons will need to show their "green screen" to the teacher who greets their child at the door, or on the playground or at the sandbox area.**

**We ask that families limit the time they spend talking with teachers/other families during drop-off and pick-up so as to avoid hallway crowding and prolonged exposures for teachers/staff/children.**

**We ask that families follow any arrows indicating direction to enter or leave to ensure more space in hallways.**

### **C. Pick Up Procedures**

As of August 2021, all families may enter the buildings using their fob to pick up their child. Some classrooms may be on the playground or in the sandbox area.

If picking up from the classroom, parents will pick up outside of their child's classroom and are not permitted into the classroom.

If picking up on the Nature Playground, the pick-up person should wait at the gate for their child. If picking up in the sandbox area behind the Nature Playground, the pick-up person may enter the Nature Playground, walk behind the climbing structure and pick up their child off at the gate to the sandbox area.

If you arrive after 5:55 pm, children will be waiting with their teacher and their belongings on the blacktop.

**Families who arrive after 6:05 pm will be billed with the late fee that is outlined on the Family Agreement.**

## **6. ITEMS FROM HOME**

- Families in our infant/young toddler classrooms (Bumblebees, Caterpillars, Wild Things and Doodlebugs) may leave their strollers in the building in the designated stroller corrals for the duration of the day.
- Bikes and scooters may not come past the gate that is next to the blacktop area.
- Bikes may be stored on the bike rack outside of the blacktop gate along the main entrance walkway.
- Children should not bring toys from home. If a child needs to bring a transition item from home to PIC, we encourage a family photo or a labeled book placed in the child's backpack.
- Children **may** bring a small **soft** stuffed animal for rest time, but it must go in their backpack as they enter PIC and can only be taken out during rest time.
- Please send in a backpack or drawstring bag (preferably washable) with your child. The bag should hold the following items
  - a sheet for crib or cot
  - light blanket for rest time
  - several changes of clothes that will be kept at PIC
  - toddler cup or preschool/school age water bottle
  - bottle bags for children using bottles
  - If >2 years old: Two face masks
- Certain items will be sent home daily including:
  - bottle bags
  - soiled clothing
  - toddler cups
  - water bottles will be sent home daily for washing and should return each day
- Nap items will be sent home weekly (on Fridays) for laundering.

## 7. CLASSROOM LIFE DURING COVID

### A. Mask Wearing

The medical evidence is strong that mask wearing can substantially reduce the risk of exposure to the COVID-19 virus. We continue to require that masks be worn by all children over the age of 2, all staff members, and by anyone who comes onto our grounds.

Wearing a mask has become a new cultural norm. With this in mind, PIC will treat mask wearing like a developmental skill in our twos and preschool age classrooms (2-5 year olds), much in the same way that we approach toilet learning. For many children, mask wearing is now second nature. But for those moving into the 2-year-olds rooms who are new to PIC, we will continue to practice mask wearing. With any new skill, the more we practice, the easier it will become. This last year we have found that children are doing better with mask wearing than we ever expected.

- **Masks for Adults**
  - All **adults and children over 2 must wear a mask** that covers their nose and mouth when on PIC grounds.
- **Masks for Children**
  - All individuals who drop off or pick up a child must wear a mask that covers their nose and mouth.
  - Masks ARE REQUIRED **indoors and outdoors** for children over 2 years of age at PIC. Families are requested to provide at least 2 cloth face masks for their children over age 2.
  - Teaching mask wearing will always be educational, never punitive.
  - Teachers will work to help children both build the skills to put on and take off their masks as independently as possible and understand why it's important to wear masks at school using social stories, songs, art, group games, conversations at morning meeting and in small groups, as well as develop systems to help keep track of and keep masks clean and sanitized.
  - Children who have trouble breathing should not wear a mask.
  - Children should not wear masks during naptime for their safety.
  - If using a disposable mask, a new mask should be used each day.
  - If using a cloth mask, it should be laundered every day.
  - **Please do not use gators (pull up face coverings) in lieu of a mask or a mask with breathing valves.**

Remember that mask wearing is a learning process for children that will take some time for those who are new to this. We encourage families to help their child learn to independently put on and remove masks. *It may be helpful to watch [Elmo and Dr. Gupta talk about wearing a mask](#) with your child.*

### B. Physical Distancing Guidelines

We know that it will not be possible to prevent young children from coming in close contact with one another and their teachers. Instead, the goal is to limit the number of people in close contact in order to lower the risk of transmission. Each classroom will be viewed as a family unit

and the following guidelines will be followed:

- Our infant/young toddlers classrooms will have up to 9 children per room, our two-year-old rooms will have up to 12 children, and our preschool rooms will have between 16 and 20 children. Our school-age children will have between 25 and 30 children per group.
- Groups will remain separate from other groups during the day except when outdoors, at which point a maximum of two classrooms will be joined (“buddy classrooms”).
- Nonessential visitors and volunteers will be restricted. Any essential visitors are required to show proof of vaccination.

### C. Emotional Needs of Children

- It is the time of the year that many new children are joining our program and many others are “moving up” to new classrooms. Some children may have difficulty with the drop-off parent not coming into the classroom. Often a family photo tucked into the pocket of a child’s backpack can make a big difference. As always, it is best to give your child a warning that you will be leaving and then quickly leave when that time comes. Please be assured that our teachers are prepared to help children with all the new routines they will encounter when returning to PIC.
- **Teachers are able to hold, touch and comfort children and be in close proximity to them. Most children will NEED hugs and our teachers will be there for them.**
- We fully expect that the younger children will be in close contact with other children in their class and “buddy classroom” and will touch one another. They are young children and we will not stop what is completely developmentally appropriate behavior. Again, our goal is to have classrooms that are individual cohorts or pods, and not to prevent children from playing with one another in their own classrooms. (Updated 1/10/21) While we will continue to keep our buddy classroom system in place, **we will no longer be requiring quarantine if someone in the buddy classroom tests positive for COVID and the classrooms have only interacted with one another outside**, due to the very low risk of transmission in this scenario.

### D Outdoor Play

- As weather permits, children will go outside daily. For the Early Learning classrooms, we have created schedules for use of the sandbox, the Nature Playground, the blacktop, the A-Z courtyard, and the TotLot that limits shared spaces to buddy classrooms.
- The children will be able to use the outdoor trikes and bikes and the bikes will be wiped with disinfectant after each use. Helmets will continue to be used when riding bikes and will be disinfected after each use.
- Children will wash hands before going outside and after they return to their classroom.

### E. Outdoor Walks

- Infant/Toddler: Classrooms will use strollers for outdoor walks and the strollers will be disinfected after each use.
- Children will hold hands when walking and will wash their hands when re-entering PIC.
- Children over age 2 must wear masks when walking to sites off PIC’s campus.

- Teachers will only walk with children to locations where they can maintain distance from others. During this time, children will not play on playground equipment outside of PIC's campus.

## 8. **HELPING YOUR NEWLY ENROLLED CHILD ADJUST TO PIC**

- Remind your child that the teachers will be wearing masks and why.
- Talk well in advance with your child about what the morning routine will look like.
- Remind your child that you will not be able to go into the classroom with your child.
- Ensure that your child has a backpack or bag to carry items to and from PIC each day.

## 9. **PAYMENT DURING SELF-QUARANTINE**

### **PIC COVID-19 Payment During Self-Quarantine Addition (7/24/20)**

We know that we may face situations where a positive COVID-19 test result from a child or teacher is reported. In the event of a positive test result in a classroom, the teachers and families in that room will be asked to self-quarantine IF the children or the teachers were present during the exposure period of the infected individual. (Updated 1/10/22) Note: There may be times when the buddy classrooms are together for short periods of time indoors. In the event that this happens and that there is a child or teacher in either of the buddy rooms who has tested positive, we will need to consider the children in both of the classrooms "exposed" and will then need to close both rooms for quarantine.

From the onset of this pandemic, we have worked hard to support our teachers. Through the support of the federal PPP loan and the generous donations of PIC families and friends, we were able to continue the salaries and benefits of our teachers through our 4-month closure in 2020. We are extremely grateful for the individual support that made that happen.

We will continue to support the teachers in our classrooms by assuring them that if they are required to self-quarantine because of exposure to COVID-19 at PIC, they will be paid during the period of quarantine.

In order to pay our expenses, we need to continue to charge families during any short-term closures and/or if the family is required to self-quarantine for reasons outside of PIC.

Our Finance Committee and Board have updated our Tuition Policy to address a potential longer term closure. This policy is now outlined in our Family Agreement.

## 10. **RESOURCES FOR FAMILIES**

We have a wealth of excellent resources for families PIC's website. The link to the resources page of our website is: <https://parentinfantcenter.org/covid-19-supports-for-families>

***We continue to all be in this together!***