

MUTUAL CARE POLICIES



BACKGROUND, GOALS, PROTOCOLS

FALL 2021



MUTUAL CARE POLICIES
BACKGROUND, GOALS AND CURRENT PROTOCOLS - FALL 2021

BACKGROUND

On January 30, 2020, one month after reporting opening an investigation into “an unknown pneumonia from an unidentified source,” the World Health Organization declared a global health emergency around what was then known as “novel coronavirus”. The first identified US case had appeared in Washington state nine days prior, an otherwise healthy 30 year old Snohomish County man who sought medical help for “severe flu symptoms.” On February 6, Patricia Dowd of Santa Clara, California became the first known US fatality. A former high-school athlete in good health and with no known conditions, Patricia was 57 years old when she passed away after five days of what she told her brother were “flu-like symptoms.”

On March 23, COVID-19 claimed former Texas A&M point guard Dave Edwards in New York City. At 48, Edwards was known to be in great shape, and was still a fierce competitor on the court. His single-season assist record with the Aggies still stands.

Around the globe, internationally known researchers and epidemiologists widely agreed that COVID-19 was an “aggressive” and “highly contagious” disease that “would require great caution to avoid a global public-health crises.”

In April of 2020, Dr. Richard Martinello and other epidemiologists from Yale Medicine began releasing data-summaries and guidance addressing the significant threats posed by COVID-19. In June, the US CDC released risk assessments for public gatherings, youth sports, group activities and the prospect of school-re-openings based on current data. Large scale educational institutions acting as hubs for greater than fifty families in buildings with sub-standard air-handling equipment, inadequate natural ventilation, common spaces, shared staff and barely acceptable cleaning practices were placed in the highest risk category for potential community transmission.

Meanwhile, public health experts throughout the world worked on protocols that could be employed by small-scale early-childhood centers, deemed essential to researchers, front-line workers and any prospect of long-term economic recovery.

Granted an essential-service exception by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in April of 2020, the directors and board of Maria’s House Montessori developed our own Mutual Care Protocols, trained a small, sequestered team, consulted with our families individually and reopened our program floor to children of essential workers on May 4, 2020. Our evaluation and improvement of our practice through consultation and comparative study has been ongoing since that time. Because we primarily serve children who are too young to receive a currently available vaccine, our approach to preventative care has remained highly protective throughout this public health dilemma. We expect and require the complete and collaborative cooperation of our families and professional faculty as we protect the most vulnerable members of our community from the unchecked and unnecessary spread a disease that has claimed an unthinkable 5.5 million human lives worldwide (January 2022).

GOALS

At Maria’s House, whatever good fortune we may have experienced thus far has been a direct result of the full, conscious and transparent cooperation that exists between our faculty, directors and parents along with the constant understanding and support of our extended family members. For this brief period in our shared history, none of us get to do exactly what we want, how we want, when we want. Human beings have a remarkable capacity for altruism, setting aside our own immediate whims for the greater good. This experience has given us all the opportunity to work that inner muscle, tempering our wills in the fire of concern, creating alternatives, and ensuring that all of us walk safely to the other side of the pandemic. We intend to see this through together.

With faith in one another, these are the goals that we share as a Montessori community:

- To eliminate all avoidable community transmission risk from our program floor
- To employ best practices regarding intake, daily program operation and House cleaning
- To ensure that the children on our program floor are not knowingly exposed to high-risk situations indirectly

Premature resumption of unchecked group activity nationwide has produced a predictable result. Whatever practical or economic arguments can be made for those gatherings, the directors and board of Maria’s House choose to stand with the thousands of early-childhood organizations nationwide who recognize our responsibility to protect the children and families of our community to the greatest extent possible, relying on each adult associated with our House to do the same.

FALL 2021 EXPOSURE PROTOCOL

Our current approach relies on our ability to minimize community transmission risk within our cohort. We make a distinction between possible exposure and direct exposure. As of today (October 30), the shared isolation and quarantine protocols for Maria’s House are as follows:

RISK	EXAMPLE	RESPONSE	RESOLUTION	TIME PERIOD
Possible Exposure	<i>Infection at workplace, school, etc. of child or household member</i>	Isolation	No additional cases at workplace / school / household Testing	3 days (presuming negative test and no additional infections)
Probable Exposure	<i>Infection of associate, teacher, etc. of child or household member</i>	Quarantine	Testing after a 3 day wait period.	10 days (presuming all household members clear and negative)

We talk with our parents and staff members individually. We know that you’re careful about these issues. We need your help to do our part, your concern for the vulnerable members of our community, and your patience as we deal with each new situation carefully and thoroughly. None of us has been here before. We look forward to not having to think about this quite so much. Until then, we’ll keep one another safe.

Mutual Care—Fall 2021



DROPOFF

- ◇ Family drop-offs begin at our front door at 7:45am and end at 8:30am
- ◇ Enter our car line and remain in your car until...
- ◇ you're one of the first two cars at our door, at which time you'll
- ◇ exit your vehicle with your child and wait by your car until
- ◇ one of our friendly staff members meets you, after which we will
 - ◇ escort your child into our vestibule
 - ◇ check your child's temperature
 - ◇ talk with your child about how they're feeling
 - ◇ apply a little always-fun Babyganics hand sanitizer
- ◇ If we have any concerns, we'll speak with you about them then.
- ◇ If all is well, you'll be on your way, and your child will enter the House



ENTRY: SCRUBBING, MASKING AND OTHER FUN THINGS

- ◇ For the time being, comfortable masks are required for anyone entering the House
- ◇ Masked explorers will head directly to our Montessori sinks for routine handwashing
- ◇ While they do that, a staff member will wipe down and stow lunch bags / boxes
- ◇ The features of your child's personal mask include:
 - ◇ Olson pattern
 - ◇ Soft, breathable layered 100% cotton
 - ◇ Comfy cotton jersey head ties (rather than ear loops)
 - ◇ Each child will have multiple masks for their exclusive use
 - ◇ Masks are laundered at the end of each day
- ◇ Disposable individual facial wipes are used throughout the day



INTERDAY

- ◇ Our usual 20 second Montessori handwashing will occur
 - ◇ after any hand-to-face contact
 - ◇ after entering or re-entering the House from outside
 - ◇ after toileting
 - ◇ prior to and after food handling
- ◇ Staff will maintain our regular practice of wiping surfaces throughout the day
- ◇ Our lavatories and program space are professionally cleaned and disinfected
- ◇ Our disinfectant is a chlorine-free 85% alcohol solution



PICKUP

- ◇ Your family will enter the pickup line as usual
- ◇ Please pull up to the porch and wait in your vehicle
- ◇ A staff member will escort your child to your car
- ◇ We'll talk with you briefly about your child's day
- ◇ We ask that you help us maintain physical distancing during pickup
- ◇ Exposure quarantines remain in effect for all families and staff