



# COVID-19 Safety Plan

2021-2022

*Updated: 9/1/2021*

The policies and procedures in the plan below are based largely on recommendations from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#) and the [Minnesota Department of Health \(MDH\)](#). The plan may be updated as guidance evolves or levels of community transmission of COVID-19 change.

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## Vaccination

HMS strongly encourages all staff who are medically able to get fully vaccinated against COVID-19. Vaccination is by far one of the best ways to prevent severe illness and death from COVID-19 and also greatly reduces spread of the virus to others, protecting our students and other staff. Substitutes and temporary staff will be required to be fully vaccinated.

Additionally, fully-vaccinated staff can avoid having to quarantine after exposure to someone with the disease, reducing disruption to our programming.

School leadership will continue to work with staff to make vaccination as easy and convenient as possible. In the event that vaccines are approved for younger children, HMS will strive to provide information and support for families.

Learn more about COVID vaccines in Minnesota at [MDH: About COVID-19 Vaccine](#), including where to find a free shot today.

## Use of masks

At this time, **everyone ages 2 and older will be required to wear a well-fitting mask while inside the school**, regardless of vaccination status. This includes staff, students, contractors, and site visitors. Staff may only remove their protective face coverings indoors when alone in a space.

Masks should be made from at least two layers of tightly-woven fabric and fit snugly with no gaps on the sides, top, or bottom. Adjustable loops and nose wires can help. To facilitate learning and social and emotional development, staff can consider a cloth mask with a clear panel. Bandanas, face shields, and masks that are made of thin or single-layer fabric or that have exhalation valves/vents are not acceptable replacements for well-fitting masks.

HMS will consider disability and other exemptions on a case-by-case basis. HMS will also support anyone who chooses to wear a mask when they deem necessary, even when not required.

Since masks can not be worn at snack/lunch or nap times, physical distancing will be maintained during that time and ventilation and/or air filtration increased.

In general, staff and students do not need to wear masks outdoors. However, particularly in areas of substantial to high transmission, CDC recommends that people aged 2 years and older wear a mask in crowded outdoor settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people who are not fully vaccinated.

Refer to the latest guidance at [MDH: Recommendations for Wearing Masks](#) and [CDC: Your Guide to Masks](#).

### **For families**

Children will need several well-fitting masks labeled with their name so that they have a clean one available at all times. Since masks can get lost, worn out, or soiled, HMS will maintain a supply of back-up masks, but families should plan to provide their own for daily use. It may be helpful for families to try a few different styles and brands to see which fit best and are most comfortable for their child.

**Families should contact the HMS Director if keeping an adequate supply of clean masks poses a financial hardship.**

For children:

- *The best mask is the one they'll wear consistently.*
- Masks should be made of at least two layers of tightly-woven fabric.
- Find a mask that is made for children to help ensure proper fit. It should cover the mouth and nose completely with **no gaps** around the sides, top, or bottom.
- A nose wire and adjustable loops/straps can help the mask fit better while maximizing comfort.
- Masks with filter inserts or KF94s/KN95s are not always better. Filters may not span the entire width of the mask or can force the air around them, causing gaps at the sides. KF94s/KN95s may be less comfortable or less likely to fit properly. Try masks for a while at home before relying on them at school.
- Disposable/paper masks may not fit children well and are not recommended unless worn under a well-fitting cotton mask ("double-masking"). During colder weather that can provoke a runny nose, double-masking can help keep a reusable mask cleaner and drier (though if your child has a consistently runny nose, they may need to be tested for COVID-19 and/or kept home. See the section on illness below).

For more tips on choosing a mask, encouraging your child to wear them, recommended suppliers, and more, refer to [Dear Pandemic: What Are the Best Masks for Kids?](#)

## Cohorting ("Pods") & physical distancing

"Cohorting" or "podding" means keeping children and staff together in smaller, consistent groups whenever possible. This limits the number of children and staff who come in contact with each other, which reduces the spread of COVID-19 and also the potential impact of quarantine protocols in the event of a confirmed case in the facility.

HMS will also maximize time outdoors, use staggered drop-off and pick-up times, stagger use of communal spaces, and maintain at least 6 feet between pods during emergency drills or any time potential mixing unexpectedly occurs.

Because it is often not possible or developmentally appropriate for small children to stay physically distanced from staff and other students, our other mitigation strategies like masking and staying home when sick are all the more important.

## Testing

Testing is one of the best tools for stopping COVID in its tracks. There are several testing options available, including community sites, mail-in molecular/PCR tests, pharmacy drive-ups, and tests provided through healthcare systems. Many COVID-19 test sites are free, but a healthcare provider may charge for their time. **If your child is age 4 or old, you can have free, highly-accurate, mail-in PCR tests delivered to your home. Visit [Test and Home](#) for details.**

Some tests, like over-the-counter rapid antigen tests (BinaxNOW, Ellume) sold at retail pharmacies and drive-through rapid antigen tests, may not be adequate for returning to school when a child is experiencing symptoms of COVID-19. While **positive** results from antigen tests are considered fairly accurate, a **negative** antigen test result should be confirmed with a PCR test. **Many antigen tests come in packs of two and recommend repeating the test 36 hours later if the first test is negative.** We strongly recommend that families follow this two-test protocol and to continue keeping the child home between antigen tests. Visit [MDH: Types of COVID-19 Tests](#) for more information.

Please refer to [MDH: COVID-19 Testing](#) for links to testing locations, the Test-at-Home program, information on types of tests, what to do while waiting for results, and more. Some retail pharmacies do provide *rapid PCR* tests, but they may need to be requested or scheduled ahead of time.

**In the event of a positive COVID-19 test, families must notify Heartwood immediately so that contact tracing can begin and quarantine periods can be started** (see next section). All personal information will be protected -- positive cases will not be identified to other HMS families or staff.

A person should seek a COVID test:

- Whenever they have [symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- If they have had [close contact](#) with someone who has tested positive for or has symptoms of COVID-19.
- If they have recently returned from domestic travel and are unvaccinated, or international travel, whether or not they are vaccinated.
- After they have attended a large gathering or were in a crowded setting, indoors or out.
- If they are not vaccinated and are participating in extracurricular activities, like sports.
- Have been advised to get tested by a healthcare provider or health department.

Visit the [MDH: Testing recommendations](#) chart for a handy quick reference.

Staff will be asked to participate in weekly screening tests via Vault Health. These free and simple molecular/PCR tests are highly accurate and can help prevent an infected person without symptoms from spreading COVID-19 at Heartwood. They will be asked to stay home and take additional tests if they begin to experience symptoms.

To the extent possible, staff should notify the Director of planned time off so that a substitute who is vaccinated can be found and have adequate time to locate and get results from a PCR test before entering the school. In the event that emergency staffing is needed

(such as if a substitute is needed under short notice), the temporary staff will be asked to take a “rapid” antigen test at minimum.

## Illness & staying home

\*Please refer to the Family Handbook for Heartwood’s full Illness Policy.

### **Staff and children should be screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to leaving for school.**

We will no longer be doing temperature checks upon entry, but if staff determine that a child is demonstrating symptoms below at drop-off and is too ill to remain at school, staff will refuse admittance.

Students or staff who become ill with COVID-19-like symptoms while in attendance will be sent home immediately, regardless of COVID-19 vaccination status or prior history of disease. An ill child will be moved to the supervised isolation area in the Director’s office until they are able to leave the premises. Staff should follow the “Calling In Sick” procedure if they start to feel sick or experience symptoms below outside of school hours.

### **Screening for illness**

If your child has **one or more** of the more common symptoms:

- New cough/cough that gets worse
- Shortness of breath
- Fever
- Loss of taste or smell

or **two or more** of the less common symptoms:

- Congestion/runny nose
- Chills
- Muscle pain
- Sore throat
- Fatigue
- Nausea
- Diarrhea or vomiting (note that children experiencing either should not be sent to school, regardless of COVID status).

or ANY symptoms during a quarantine period, your child and all siblings must **stay home until the ill child receives a negative test result for COVID or has been cleared by a doctor to return to school free of other communicable diseases. If no negative test and clearance is obtained, the child must stay home until 10 days after the symptoms began and have improved.** After 10 days, they may return if they are well enough to participate in daily activities (symptoms have improved, no fever without use of fever-reducing medicine). If the child’s symptoms persist longer than 10 days, please consider seeking a medical appointment.

Without a negative test or clearance for the ill child, **siblings in the same household will need to quarantine for 14 days** past their last contact with the ill child during their 10-day

infectious period. This will mean staying home for a total 24 days if the ill sibling was not tested/cleared.

If your child has only one less common symptom (the bulleted second list), please evaluate at home to determine if your child is well enough to participate in normal daily activities. Staff are expected to follow similar protocol.

**In the event of a positive COVID-19 test, families are required to notify Heartwood immediately so that close-contact tracing can begin and quarantine periods can be started.** All personal information will be protected -- positive cases will not be identified to other HMS families or staff.

Please see the Minnesota Department of Health COVID-19 decision tree that details the guidance Heartwood will follow once it is updated for Fall 2021: [Recommended COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth Programs, and Child Care Programs](#)

More information can also be found at [Recommendations for Handling a Confirmed Case of COVID-19](#) and [CDC: Quarantine & Isolation](#).

## Quarantine & contact tracing

In general, being a “close contact” of someone with COVID-19 means being less than 6 feet from them for 15 minutes or more throughout a 24-hour period, OR living in the same household as someone with COVID-19. HMS will work with families and state and local health departments to identify and communicate with close contacts should a COVID case be identified in a Heartwood student or staff person.

Because HMS attendees are not stationary in desks and often work and play close to each other, it can be difficult to determine who their close contacts are in pod. **In many situations, a positive case in a pod will result in all other pod members needing to quarantine (stay home, get tested, and watch for symptoms) for 14 days. We encourage families to plan for this possibility to the extent possible.**

We recognize that being without child care is a significant stressor and hardship. Consider planning alternative home activities, identifying other potential vaccinated/low-risk caregivers who can provide child care at your home, and reserving sick/vacation/FMLA leave in case your child will need to be out of school for an extended period.

Any staff or student identified as a close contact by HMS or a health department should seek COVID-19 testing, even if they are vaccinated. Visit [MDH: Close contacts & tracing](#) for more information.

**Unvaccinated close contacts** will be required to remain home for the full 14-day quarantine period. Due to the fact that children this age are unable to maintain 6 feet of social distancing and must remove masks throughout the day for eating and napping, a shortened quarantine period will not be accepted to return to school.

**Fully-vaccinated close contacts or anyone who has had a positive PCR COVID-19 test in the past 90 days** does not need to quarantine, but should still get tested and monitor for

symptoms. If symptoms develop during the quarantine period, all siblings must also remain home until a negative COVID test is received.

**In the event of a positive COVID-19 test, families must notify Heartwood immediately so that contact tracing can begin and quarantine periods can be started.** All personal information will be protected -- positive cases will not be identified to other HMS families or staff.

## Handwashing & respiratory etiquette

Hand hygiene routines will continue to be a part of daily life at HMS. Staff will wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water:

- Upon arrival
- Before & after preparing any food
- Before serving food
- Before & after eating food
- After using the toilet
- When moving between environments
- After helping children in the bathroom
- After sneezing, coughing, or blowing one's nose (or after helping a child do so)
- After handling animals
- Before departure
- Whenever hands are visibly dirty

If soap and water are not readily available, staff may use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Children will follow a similar handwashing protocol. Hand sanitizer will only be used under strict supervision, and washing instead is preferred. It may be helpful for children to keep a fragrance-free bottle of lotion in their cubby, especially during the dry winter months when hands can become chapped.

Additionally, staff and students should follow proper respiratory etiquette (cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or coughing/sneezing into the crook of an elbow) to protect our community from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. HMS will monitor and reinforce these behaviors in children and provide adequate handwashing supplies for all.

It is important for staff to comfort crying, sad, or anxious children, which often involves close contact. To the extent possible, staff should protect themselves and other children by:

- Washing hands frequently.
- Washing their hands and anywhere on their body that has been touched by a child's body fluids.
- Avoid touching their eyes or face while in contact with a child.
- Wearing a mask while close to or in contact with a child, even outdoors.

Resources to support handwashing and respiratory etiquette:

- [MDH: Hand Hygiene](#)
- [MDH: Hand Hygiene Print Materials](#)
- [Cover Your Cough](#)
- [CDC Handwashing: Health Promotion Materials](#)

## Ventilation & filtration

Because COVID-19 is primarily spread by airborne particles, HMS will maximize ventilation by opening windows whenever possible while also assuring safety from falls or extreme temperatures.

Additionally, HMS will use portable high-efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtration units in each classroom and any shared spaces. Ionizing filter features will not be used, as they can generate ozone.

Refer to [Ventilation Guidance for Schools: COVID-19](#) and [CDC: Ventilation in Schools and Childcare Programs](#) for more information.

## Cleaning & disinfection

The virus that causes COVID-19 is mainly spread by respiratory droplets. The virus can also be spread if someone touches a surface contaminated with the virus and then touch their eyes, nose, or mouth, although this is not the primary way the virus spreads.

In general, cleaning once a day is usually enough to sufficiently remove potential virus that may be on surfaces. Disinfecting (using disinfectants on the [U.S. Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\)'s List N disinfectants](#) list) is a subsequent step that removes any remaining germs on surfaces, which further reduces any risk of spreading infection.

All cleaning materials must be kept out of reach of children. Windows should be opened during use to decrease any fumes, and when possible, use should occur when children are not in the room.

A daily schedule should be established for routine environmental cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces (doorknobs, shared tables, faucet handles, shared devices, etc.) in classrooms and common spaces. Routine environmental cleaning should be scheduled when students are not occupying the space.

For more information on cleaning a facility regularly, when to clean more frequently or disinfect, cleaning a facility when someone is sick, safe storage of cleaning and disinfecting products, and considerations for protecting workers who clean facilities, refer to [CDC: Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility](#).

If a facility has had a sick person or someone who tested positive for COVID-19 within the last 24 hours, clean AND disinfect the space.

More resources to support cleaning and disinfection:

- [Caring for Our Children: National Health and Safety Performance Standards: Routine Schedule for Cleaning, Sanitizing, and Disinfecting](#)
- [Caring for Our Children: Cleaning and Sanitizing of Toys](#)

## Visitors

HMS will strictly limit visitors inside the building at this time and prohibit non-essential visits. Pick up/drop off procedures will happen outdoors, and family meetings with staff will either occur outside or virtually until further notice. Visitors will not be allowed entry to the school if they are sick or have symptoms of COVID-19.

## Resources

- [CDC: Families with Vaccinated & Unvaccinated Members](#)
- [CDC: Families & Children](#)
- [MDH: Recommended COVID-19 Decision Tree for People in Schools, Youth Programs, and Child Care Programs \(PDF\)](#) (due for Fall 2021 update as of 8/25)
- [MDH: Masking Recommendations for Child Care](#)
- [MDH: COVID-19 Testing](#) - Includes links to testing locations, the Test-at-Home program, information on types of tests and which are appropriate, and more.
- [CDC: Know What to Expect at Your Child's K-12 School or Early Care and Education Program](#)
- [CDC: My Child is Showing Signs of COVID-19 at Child Care: What Do I Do? Quick Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers](#)