



COVID-19 Safety Plan

2022-2023

Updated: 10/27/2022

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.

For questions, please contact Emily Erickson, HMS Executive Director:
emily@heartwoodmontessori.org.

Contents

[Vaccination](#)

[Use of masks](#)

[Cohorting \(“Pods”\) & physical distancing](#)

[Testing](#)

[Illness & staying home](#)

[Test-To-Stay & contact tracing](#)

[Handwashing & respiratory etiquette](#)

[Ventilation & filtration](#)

[Cleaning & disinfection](#)

[Visitors](#)

[Resources](#)

Vaccination

HMS strongly encourages all staff and children 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 school community. Substitutes and temporary staff will be required to be fully vaccinated.

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

School leadership will continue to work with staff and families to make vaccination as easy and convenient as possible.

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

Use of masks

Update as of 10/27/22: Heartwood has transitioned to a mask-optional policy. We encourage staff and children who prefer to wear a mask to continue to wear a mask to their comfort level. We understand that there are many reasons why an individual may choose to continue to wear a mask in school, and will fully support all children and staff who choose to.

Masks will be required to be worn:

- If the community spread level is “high” based on [the CDC COVID-19 level for Hennepin County](#). This will be checked weekly. Masks will be required until the level drops to “medium” or “low.”
- If there are more than 2 cases in a classroom over a period of 5 days, that classroom will be required to wear masks for 5 days. If there are more than 5 cases in the school, masks will be required school-wide for 5 days.
- If you are exposed to COVID regardless of vaccination status a mask must be worn for 10 days past last exposure.
- If you are an adult recovering from COVID and end isolation prior to 10 days. (Children are still required to isolate for the full 10 days due to inability to consistently mask).
- When recovering from an illness.

[HMS COVID Decision Chart](#)

Previous policy: At this time, everyone ages 2 and older in the Children’s House 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.

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

If you choose to have your child continue to wear a mask, 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.
- 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?](#)

The mask policy will be revisited when there has been enough opportunity for all students under the age of five who desire and are eligible to receive the vaccine to be fully vaccinated.

Testing

Testing is one of the best tools for stopping COVID in its tracks. There are several testing options available, including community sites, 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.

While **positive** results from antigen tests are considered fairly accurate, a **negative** antigen test result should be confirmed with a PCR test when possible. **Many antigen tests come in packs of two and recommend repeating the test 36 hours later if the first test is negative.** If a family is relying only on antigen testing, we strongly recommend that they follow this two-test protocol and to continue keeping the child home between antigen tests if symptomatic. Visit [MDH: Types of COVID-19 Tests](#) for more information.

Please refer to [MDH: COVID-19 Testing](#) for links to testing locations, 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 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 involving situations of greater risk of exposure (ex. large gathering without a mask) 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 there is an outbreak or cluster of cases
- 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 participate in weekly screening tests provided by Tested and Protected as long as those tests are available. Weekly screening will also be provided to any family who wants to participate using the same program. If you want to add or remove your child from the offered screening testing, contact the Director.

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.

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 after an exposure, 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 or clearance is obtained, the child must stay home until 5 days after the symptoms began and have improved. Heartwood Montessori School provides free at-home COVID tests to all families while supplies last.** After 5 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.

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. All personal information will be protected -- positive cases will not be identified to other HMS families or staff.

Contract Tracing and Test-to-Stay

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.

If your child is unvaccinated and has not had COVID within the last 90 days, they will be required to participate in the test-to-stay program to continue attending school. We encourage families to plan for this possibility to the extent possible.

[Test to Stay](#) (TTS) programs are an alternative to traditional at-home quarantine for close contacts who are not up to date with COVID-19 vaccines or have not had COVID in the last 90 days. Test to Stay combines contact tracing and frequent testing to allow those who have been exposed to attend school in person. CDC continues to recommend TTS as an important strategy schools should consider in order to support in-person learning.

Heartwood has many free antigen tests available at the school that will be offered if your child is participating in Test-to-Stay. If you would like antigen tests for at-home use, please contact school staff.

Students eligible for and participating in test-to-stay will be required to wear a well-fitting mask. **Your child will need to be antigen tested every morning for five days in order to attend school. Proof of the negative test will be required before drop off daily. Children should monitor for symptoms for 10-days, and if symptoms develop they will no longer be able to participate in Test-To-Stay.**

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.

Fully-vaccinated close contacts or anyone who has had a positive COVID-19 test in the past 90 days do not need to participate in test-to-stay, but should still get tested on day five and monitor for symptoms. If symptoms develop during the test-to-stay period, they and 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 Test-to-Stay can be started. All personal information will be protected -- positive cases will not be identified to other HMS families or staff.

In the event of a positive case in the home, Heartwood encourages participating in test-to-stay even for vaccinated children or those who have had COVID in the last 90 days to reduce the risk of community spread/outbreaks.

In the event of an outbreak/cluster of cases, Heartwood reserves the right to implement a five-day quarantine for all unvaccinated individuals and those who have not had COVID in the previous 90 days in order to stop the spread of illness.

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.

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.

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

Pick up/drop off procedures will happen outdoors, and family meetings with staff will either occur outside or virtually to the greatest extent possible. Visitors will not be allowed entry to the school if they are sick or have symptoms of COVID-19.

Heartwood Montessori School will be resuming in-person events this year. All events will take place outside to the greatest extent possible, and any time spent indoors will require that all adults and children over two wear a KN95 or equivalent mask regardless of vaccination status.

Resources

- [Operational Guidance for K-12 Schools and Early Care and Education Programs to Support Safe In-Person Learning](#)
- [CDC: Families with Vaccinated & Unvaccinated Members](#)
- [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](#)