



STEPS Head Start
Moving Lives Forward

COVID-19 and Communicable Disease Mitigation Plan

Communicable Disease Mitigation Strategies

STEPS has a plan to mitigate the spread of communicable diseases and keep children, families, and staff as safe as possible. Parents, children, and staff need to understand they are assuming a level of risk anytime they are in a public space and no preventative measures are going to be 100% effective. At risk populations, such as older adults, people with asthma, people who are immunocompromised, pregnant women, and minorities should take extra precautions to ensure their safety.

The goal of this plan is to provide safe supportive learning environments for children and enable parents and caregivers to be at work. These layered prevention strategies are in place to mitigate the spread of infectious diseases, such as, SARS-CoV-2, COVID-19, influenza (flu), respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), and norovirus, and support healthy environments for all. In accordance with 45CFR1302.93 and 1302.94 of the Head Start Program Performance Standards staff, certain contractors, and volunteers in Head Start programs will be required to be vaccinated.

Disease Prevention - Routine

The following preventative procedures will be used to help limit the spread of disease during daily operations.

- Educate families, staff, and community partners about the benefits of staying up to date on vaccinations.
- Ensure policies that require the exclusion of sick children and staff are enforced.
- The agency will provide paid time off or sick leave that staff can use and encourage sick workers to stay home.
- COVID-19 Community levels will be monitored weekly utilizing current CDC data.
- Hands will be washed often with soap and water.
- If soap and water are not readily available, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol will be used. Staff will supervise young children when they use hand sanitizer to prevent swallowing alcohol. Hand sanitizer will be stored in a locked container or cabinet out of the reach of children. This includes on school buses.
- Parents and visitors will be encouraged to wash hands with soap & water if accessing any part of the center beyond the lobby.
- Parents, consultants, and visitors will be required to wash hands between working with different children or groups.
- Frequently touched surfaces will be clean and disinfected throughout the day.
- Electronics such as tablet faces, cell phones, keyboards, and computer mice will be cleaned with an alcohol wipe containing at least 70% alcohol.
- Cough and sneezes will be covered with a single use tissue that is disposed of immediately after use and hands will be washed.
- Face coverings or masks are available to all staff and children over the age of 2 when in the Head Start/Early Head Start Center and on Head Start school buses. Use of masks is optional unless spread levels warrants.
- Disposable gloves will be worn for cleaning, screening, diapering, food service, and when contacting bodily fluids.
- Infant/toddler staff will be provided with smocks that will be used when washing, feeding, or holding very young children and long hair will be worn up. Smocks will be washed daily and changed when/if

they become soiled with body fluids.

- Air purifiers will be present in each classroom and used daily.
- Toothbrushing will be conducted in a manner that allows children to brush teeth one at a time, all toothbrushes for preschool age children will be stored in a toothbrush sanitizer, and toddler toothbrushes will be stored in a hygienic holder with a closing lid.

Level II Mitigation Strategies

Based on community or program spread STEPS will implement Level II Mitigation Strategies.

- Masks will be required for all students over the age of 2, staff, and visitors.
- Physical distancing and barriers will be required.
- Class sizes may be adjusted, and alternating schedules may be implemented to ensure in-person services at least 50% of the time.
- Enhanced cleaning and disinfecting of toys and classroom materials will take place throughout the day. The number of toys on shelves will be limited and rotated, all toy bins will have lids.
- Visitors and volunteers will not be allowed, unless required for compliance with providing services under IDEA, or other components of the Head Start Program Performance Standards, such as, mental health and nutrition consultants. Site Administrator approval will be required for all guests.

The following classroom practices will be in place during a pandemic or widespread outbreak.

- Cots/Cribs will be placed as far apart as possible with a desired 6 ft space but a minimum of 3 feet will be allowed. Cots will be placed with alternating pattern of head to toe.
- Children will have an assigned storage area, cubby for their personal belongings. Items in cubbies will be stored in plastic bags.
- Children must always have 2 changes of clothes each in a separate gallon size Ziploc bag with their name on it in their cubby.
- Family style dining will be discontinued, and all meals will be plated by kitchen staff.
- Staff will stagger playground times and keep groups separate for special activities such as art, music, and exercising.
- Cots will be assigned for individual use and will be disinfected daily between uses, cots and blankets will be stored in a plastic bag in the child's cubby when not in use.
- Early Head Start crib sheets will be removed, washed, and replaced daily. No blankets are allowed in cribs. Cribs mattresses and rugs will be washed and disinfected daily. Cribs will be assigned for individual use.
- Toothbrushing in the classroom will be suspended and a toothbrush and toothpaste will be sent home with educational materials for parents.
- Early Head Start children will be part of a primary care group. Children will be closely monitored, and an effort will be made to distance children in the classroom. Children over the age 2 will be required to wear a mask.
- Teachers will incorporate lesson plans to assist children with gaining an understanding of how germs are spread and "how to be healthy." Visual reminders to avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth, wash hands, and cover sneezes and cough will be present throughout the center and classrooms. These will also be sent home for parents to use during distance learning.

Level III Mitigation Strategies

- ONLY under the recommendation of the Virginia Department of Health, Office of Head Start, or another regulatory agency will STEPS close classrooms for the required amount of time.

Parents/Visitors/Volunteers/Consultants/Contractors

- Visitors and volunteers will be allowed with Site Administrator approval and the number of guests will be limited.
- Consultants, such as, Mental Health and Health Care workers will be allowed as needed and in accordance with IEP/IFSP.
- During a known outbreak or under the guidance of the Department of Health, STEPS will implement screening for all parents, volunteers, and visitors to include a temperature check, masks and shoe coverings will be provided, and entrance into the facility will be limited to necessary personnel only.

Communication

- In accordance with 1302.41 of the HSPPS, this policy will be made available to all parents and all health emergencies will be reported to parents and staff.
- All positive cases of a communicable disease will be reported to parents of exposed children and staff within 24 hours, via our school notification system in ChildPlus.
- If spread levels require an escalation to Level II Mitigation Strategies notices will be sent to families electronically and in writing.
- Site Administrators will notify any community partner that has frequent and routine access to the center of outbreaks and escalation in protocol as necessary.

Daily Health Screening

In accordance with VADSS requirements a daily health screening is conducted daily on all students. STEPS will continue to implement the Daily Health Screenings for children attending the program and staff. Screenings will be entered into ChildPlus.

** The check will only be done on days when the child is physically attending the center. It is not necessary when the child is participating in distance learning. **

Staff will be required to submit the Daily Health Pre-Check form prior to 8:00 am daily.

Exclusion

STEPS will require sick children and staff to stay home. This procedure can be found in the Family Handbook and in the Operations Manual – HLTH208. Parents are expected to be diligent about keeping children home when they are sick. Information on child sickness policies can be found in the Family Handbook located at <https://www.stepsheadstart.com/parent-corner>

If Someone is or Becomes Sick:

- Staff will follow procedures to ensure children and staff, who come to the Head Start center sick or become sick while at the facility, are sent home as soon as possible.
- Staff will keep sick children and staff separate from well children and staff until they can be sent home. Where space and proper supervision can be maintained an isolation area will be established at each center. If an isolation area is not feasible a cot will be set up in a corner of the classroom, a minimum of 6ft away from well staff and children, that will be used to isolate a sick child until the child can be

picked up by a family member or authorized caregiver.

- All surfaces that were contacted by the child or staff will immediately be cleaned and disinfected.
- Sick staff members/children will not return to work/school until they are no longer displaying symptoms of illness and have been cleared by a health care professional.
- Staff or children with a positive COVID-19 test will be removed from the program for 5 days. They must be symptom free, and a negative test may be required prior to returning to work or school.