

Palisades Montessori

A Neighborhood Preschool Since 1984



COVID-19 Update to Parent Handbook for Palisades Montessori

rev. July 26, 2022

Overview

In March 2020, Palisades Montessori temporarily closed its facilities and transitioned to distance learning to protect all members of the community during the first phase of the SARS-CoV-2/COVID-19 pandemic. Our planning has consistently been informed by guidance issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the District of Columbia.

In June 2020, in response to the adverse impact the global pandemic has had on education for students, the American Academy of Pediatrics issued a statement “strongly advocat[ing] that all policy considerations for the current... year start with a goal of having students physically present in school.” We share this priority, especially as it concerns our very young students, whose needs for social-emotional and academic development cannot be well-met by distance learning.

When we reopened Palisades Montessori in June 2020, we were among the very first District of Columbia Child Development Centers to re-open. Our goal has been, and is, to keep our students, faculty, and staff safe while continuing to support as many opportunities for in-person learning as possible.

The spread of COVID-19 continues to fluctuate throughout the nation and around the world. In order to preserve our opportunity to meet our students every day in person at our facilities, everyone must continue do their part, steadily and mindfully, every day.

Leading up to the reopening of in-person learning in June 2020, Palisades Montessori surveyed parents and published weekly newsletters to inform the community. The purpose of this document is to formalize what was learned along the way into an amendment to the Palisades Montessori Parent Handbook. After you read this document in full, and visit the external links, we will ask for your signature to indicate your agreement, as well as your signature on a school-wide liability waiver. These documents, and your agreement, will remain in effect for the duration of your enrollment in Palisades Montessori.

Adhering to these health and safety protocols is an expression of respect for the well-being of our Palisades Montessori community. Paying close attention to our own health is the best means to protect ourselves and other community members. Thank you for valuing our special community, and working together with us during this time with commitment and compassion.

Summary of Expectations

Palisades Montessori expects all community members to:

- Understand and agree that the teachers may administer a daily health-screening in the classroom, which includes a temperature check with an infrared thermometer.
- Refrain from coming to school if positive for COVID-19, following all current regulations from the DC Department of Health and available on the Mayor's [COVID-19 portal](#).
- Refer all medical questions to your student's pediatrician for consultation and resolution.
- Follow all safety protocols and policies, including wearing face coverings when required and maintaining a safe physical distance from others when required.
- Comply with the local laws and health orders of the District of Columbia and surrounding area.

Palisades Montessori consequently reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to revoke enrollment privileges or to take any lesser measures it deems appropriate for any violation of its health-related practices.

COVID-19 Policies and Procedures

Group Size, Physical Distancing, Face Coverings, Exclusion, Dismissal and Return to Care

When at school, students and teachers will follow the COVID-19 guidance issued by the DC Department of Health and/or the Office of the State Superintendent of Education regarding group size, physical distancing, face coverings, exclusion, dismissal and return to care. Parents can [view the current guidelines by visiting this link](#). The school will do its best to provide the updated guidelines to parents each time they are released. Parents should expect these guidelines to be modified frequently. Please note that these guidelines are not Palisades Montessori's guidelines. They are the guidelines issued by our city, the District of Columbia, via the licensing body that provides our license to operate.

We would like to provide helpful advice regarding face coverings. At this time, face coverings are not required for students. Should face coverings be required again in the future, such as if the community level rises to "HIGH" or anytime at Palisades Montessori's sole discretion, each student will provide their own **non-cloth** face coverings. Face coverings must be thick enough (e.g., multi-ply) to do their intended job well. Try blowing out a candle with your student's face covering on. If you can blow out the candle, then it is not thick enough. The face covering should fit snugly around the face and cover the nose, mouth, and under the chin. We recommend you practice wearing face coverings at home, and model this to your student. Begin with short intervals (15 minutes or fewer) and work up to longer times. Be sure to practice wearing the face covering outside, too.

Handwashing, Hygiene, and Cleaning

Palisades Montessori has added additional handwashing and hand sanitizing capacity in the classrooms. When at school, students and teachers will follow the COVID-19 guidance issued by the DC Department of Health and/or the Office of the State Superintendent of Education regarding handwashing, hygiene and cleaning. Parents can [view the current guidelines by visiting this link](#). The school will do its best to provide the updated guidelines to parents each time they are released. Parents should expect these guidelines to be modified frequently. Please note that these guidelines are not Palisades Montessori's guidelines. They are the guidelines issued by our city, the District of Columbia, via the licensing body that provides our license to operate.

We would like to provide helpful advice regarding handwashing. We recommend that parents practice handwashing at home with children. Children love to wash their hands! Wet hands with running water

and apply soap. Lather hands by rubbing them together and scrub the backs of hands, between fingers, and under the nails. Keep rubbing for at least 20 seconds. Rinse hands well and dry them with a clean paper towel.

Residency in DC / MD / VA

All community members should comply with the regulations and orders issued by the District of Columbia's Office of the Mayor, as well as their local governments (if living in MD or VA). Parents can [view the current guidelines by visiting this link](#) for Washington, DC. Please note that these guidelines are not Palisades Montessori's guidelines; they are the guidelines issued by our city, the District of Columbia. The school will do its best to provide the updated guidelines to parents each time they are released.

Facilities

In order to mitigate the risk of transmission, Palisades Montessori has enhanced the safety of our facilities. These include: installation of ionization air purifiers inside all HVAC systems; HVAC air balancing and filter upgrades; duct cleaning; and opening windows and doors when weather permits. Palisades Montessori has also increased the frequency of cleaning and disinfecting procedures daily; and added intensive mid-week and weekend professional cleaning services.

Surveillance Testing

Since November 9, 2020, regular COVID-19 PCR surveillance testing has been required for all students and staff. The goal of Palisades Montessori's surveillance PCR testing for COVID-19 is to quantitatively monitor the infection rate within our specific, local cohort over time. Testing does not replace other prevention measures (e.g. mask wearing, physical distancing).

It is important for parents to note that the purpose of conducting regular surveillance testing for COVID-19 is for sentinel surveillance and not for admittance purposes. Parents must still follow all of the guidance provided if/when a child shows any of the symptoms listed on the daily health check.

COVID-19 surveillance testing occurs on a regular basis at school; teachers accompany the students for the tests, and parents are not present. All tests are conducted by licensed medical providers.

1. What type of test will be administered?

Mid-nasal swab PCR tests will be administered on each testing day to all staff and students, usually on Mondays.

2. How often will testing occur?

At this time, Palisades Montessori will maintain an every-week surveillance testing program. Please note that the frequency could change in the future. We will notify you with ample advance notice of each testing day.

3. What is the cost of COVID-19 testing?

There is no charge for school-sponsored testing. Health insurance information will be requested by our vendor(s) during the pre-registration process to seek insurance coverage and reimbursement for the cost of the test.

4. *Can I have my child tested for COVID-19 outside of school, and provide the results?*

Yes. Families may obtain a PCR test elsewhere and submit the results to the school's office **by Wednesday evening** of the same week in order to remain in compliance. Please note that only PCR tests (mid-nasal or nasopharyngeal) will be accepted at this time. Rapid (antigen) tests will not be accepted at this time for the purpose of the school's surveillance testing program.

5. *When do I receive test results?*

All of the vendors typically return results within 24 to 48 hours, although the response time could be longer. The vendor will share results directly with families or staff, as applicable, by email. Prior to testing, we/the vendor will ask for your signature on consent forms for permission to disclose test results to Palisades Montessori's office. All student health information will be kept confidential. All COVID-19 guidelines, as issued by the Department of Health, will be followed.

6. *What does a positive test result mean?*

Positive test results for COVID-19 indicates that the virus was detected and the individual is infected with the virus. The infected individual is expected to quarantine immediately and contact their healthcare provider for further guidance. Positive results, as required by law, may be shared with the D.C. Health Department.

7. *If my child is recovering from COVID-19, what are my next steps re: PCR testing?*

The current scientific consensus indicates that individuals who are recovering from COVID-19 infection may continue to test positive on a PCR test for up to 90 days after the date of the positive test. You may request an exemption from the PCR testing requirement for the 90-day period from the date of your child's positive test or system onset. Exemption requests must be submitted in writing by email to the school. All other DC DOH and OSSE health guidance continues to apply to your child during these 90 days of exemption from the testing program.

8. *What if my child misses a regularly-scheduled testing date for personal (non-illness) reasons?*

If your child is absent for non-illness/non-quarantine reasons during a regularly-scheduled testing date, you must get a PCR **by Wednesday evening** in order to remain in compliance; results should be sent by email to the school's office. Failure to abide by this policy will result in exclusion from school until the requirement is met.

Test-to-Stay for Unvaccinated Close Contacts

Persons who are considered close contacts will no longer be required to quarantine as of June 21, 2022. Please note, however, that this is at Palisades Montessori's sole discretion. Quarantine for close contacts could be reinstated at any time, either at the school's sole discretion, or by mandate of the DC Department of Health, as it was during the two⁺-year period from March 2020 – June 2022.

In order to keep our community as safe as possible, Palisades Montessori will implement a test-to-stay program for unvaccinated close contacts. If identified as a close contact, and if unvaccinated, then your child may continue to attend school. However, you **must** administer a rapid antigen test to your child within one hour of attending school each morning for five days post-exposure and submit those results by email daily in order to be admitted to school.

If your child is fully vaccinated, then we strongly **recommend** that you test your child every day for five days post-exposure before coming to school. However, Test-to-Stay is not required for individuals who are fully up-to-date on their vaccinations.

Please note that quarantine is still the gold standard and is recommended for unvaccinated close contacts by both the CDC and the DC Department of Health. Last week's changes in licensing permit us to no longer require close-contact quarantines for unvaccinated persons. Adopting a test-to-stay program is at our own discretion. We still do strongly encourage you to keep your child at home for the recommended quarantine, if identified as a close contact.

Travel Outside of DC/MD/VA

Upon return from travel, families and staff must follow the most recent guidance on coronavirus.dc.gov as provided by the DC Department of Health. Guidelines are updated with frequency.