

Dear Families,

All of our MA Little Sprouts schools are participating in the COVID Testing for Child Care program administered through the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). This program allows children and staff exposed to COVID in education and care settings to regularly “test and stay” to help reduce classroom closures due to COVID.

We are rolling out a similar COVID test and stay program at our NH schools. In the absence of a NH state funded program, families and staff will be responsible for the cost of COVID rapid/antigen/self-tests. The [COVID Testing & Isolation Guidance \(updated 2/16/22\)](#) is still in effect, and is the guiding policy for enrolled children under 24 months, and for those who choose not to participate in the Testing for Child Care program.

We embrace the opportunity to bring test and stay to our schools so we can improve continuity of care, resulting in greater support for your child’s education and emotional development, and more reliable service to you.

You will find an in-depth description of the program below, followed by an update to our **masking policy** as well.

**Testing for Child Care is a voluntary program that runs in addition to our existing COVID policies and procedures.**

**Who can participate?**

All current staff and enrolled children who are 24 months and older and who meet the criteria below. Please know that per the manufacturer’s labeling, all COVID rapid/antigen/self-tests are not approved for use on children under the age of 24 months.

**Updated, optional COVID testing, quarantine, and isolation guidelines for children over 24 months:**

Families with children who are 24 months and older may choose to test their children using rapid antigen COVID tests and continue sending their children to school under the following circumstances:

- **Children who show COVID symptoms and are sent home according to the current sick policy. They may return the following day if:**
  - They test negative on a COVID rapid test and the family provides proof of a negative COVID test result before arriving at school
  - Depending on the symptoms, a child may require a doctor’s note to return and must still meet conditions set in the sick policy, such as being fever-free for at least 24 hours without being given fever-reducing medication
- **An unvaccinated child is exposed to COVID:**
  - The exposed child must undergo COVID rapid testing for five consecutive school days following exposure (weekends do not require testing)
    - For example, if your child was exposed on Wednesday, they would test Thursday morning before arriving at school (Day 1), Friday morning (Day 2), would not have to test on the weekend (Days 3 and 4) but would test Monday morning (Day 5)
  - The family must provide proof of a negative COVID test result before arriving at school each day following the directions provided
  - If exposed at school, if anyone additional tests positive, the 5-day testing restarts for the remainder of the cohort
- **A child tests positive for COVID, isolates for five days at home, and may return to school on Day 6, if:**
  - The child can take a rapid test on Day 5 and return as soon as Day 6 if the rapid test is negative and the child is not experiencing symptoms or symptoms are significantly improving



Early Education & Child Care

- If a child tests positive on Day 5 or does not test, the child can return on Day 11

### **How do I share results?**

- If your child falls into one of the three categories above and you choose to rapid test them, please fill out the acknowledgement form and email both the form and a picture of the test to your school Director before arriving for drop-off at school

### **What tests do I use?**

As of now, the state has not provided early education centers tests to use for this program, so you will have to supply your own tests. You may use any FDA approved rapid antigen test. Per federal law, all private health insurers must cover the cost of up to eight rapid antigen tests per month for everyone on the policy holder's plan.

Please note that we may still need to keep some classrooms temporarily closed when staff infections compromise our operations. Thank you for your cooperation.

### **Are there any changes to the masking policy?**

Mask mandates in schools and other public gathering spaces are being lifted in some areas. We are pleased for our entire school community to be returning to a greater degree of normalcy. The teaching, learning, and nurturing of children have suffered due to the impact of COVID in our schools. We will continue to monitor the health situation in the weeks and months ahead and evolve our policies according to the best guidance from the medical community and federal, state, and local agencies.

### **Beginning on Monday, February 28:**

- **Masking will no longer be required for children of any age in our schools and centers**
  - We will continue to support families who choose to have their children mask.
  - We continue to ask for your understanding that the right choices for some families are not the right choices for all families; we remain an inclusive, open, and respectful space to learn and grow.
- **Employees may choose not to mask if:**
  - Before or upon arrival at school for their first day of work each week, they produce a negative COVID test result (all forms of COVID tests accepted).
    - Please know that per federal law, all health insurers must reimburse policyholders for up to eight COVID tests per month.
    - Little Sprouts Human Resources will be offering guidance on submitting insurance reimbursements over the next several weeks.

### **We also want to remind everyone of two important truths:**

- 1) Child care centers and schools like ours care for the nation's largest unvaccinated population against COVID, children under the age of five.
- 2) Our schools have noticed a collective decrease in common illnesses during mask mandates.

To continue doing our collective best for our youngest children and to help minimize the spread of germs, unmasked employees who begin to show minor cold symptoms during the school day will be asked to mask. Masks will continue to be available at school for employees and children (upon families' requests).

Our current COVID testing and school sick policies remain in place and unchanged at this time. As a convenience, attached is an updated COVID Testing and Isolation chart. Please remember that we are subject to state law and regulations set by local boards of health and the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), which may require adjustments in our policy to remain in compliance and operating.



Please continue to connect with your school director for any further clarifications.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "David". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "D".

David Post  
CEO, Little Sprouts, LLC