

July 2, 2021

Greetings Little Sprouts Families,

As we enter the summer of 2021, we are beyond pleased to find ourselves in a different set of circumstances compared to those of one year ago. The CDC, state governments, and child care licensing agencies have slowly been lifting restrictions in response to both the increase in COVID vaccinations and, in return, the current trajectory of the COVID pandemic. As such, we have been reviewing and updating our related policies.

While many policies relate to all of our locations, others are state-specific and, at times, vary town-by-town. You will find a summary of these changes below. If you have additional questions, please speak to your Executive Director, who can speak to the measures specific to your school.

### **Masks:**

As mask mandates have changed, we have altered our policies in order to match state guidance. [Our full policy on masks can be here.](#)

#### **For Staff:**

- Little Sprouts highly recommends and encourages staff and educators to continue to wear masks when inside a program and unable to physically distance. Unvaccinated individuals will continue to wear masks while working with children, unless they are outside and able to physically distance. Fully vaccinated staff (who have provided documentation of immunization) may, if they choose, remove their mask while in the program unless local guidance states otherwise based on community transmission rates.

#### **Children:**

- While inside the program, children must mask according to current local state guidance.
  - [In Massachusetts](#), children over the age of 5 should wear a face mask inside except while eating, drinking, sleeping, or napping.
  - [In New Hampshire](#), children over the age of 7 are recommended to wear masks or cloth face coverings while within the program.
- Children do not have to wear masks or maintain distance when outdoors and should not while eating or sleeping.

#### **Visitors and Families:**

- All visitors entering the program, including family members, must wear a mask. Family members picking up or dropping off outside are encouraged to wear a mask.

### **Student Sick Policy:**

Families are no longer required to complete an attestation page when dropping off their child. Little Sprouts staff will conduct a visual health screening of the child. Additionally, we ask you to screen your own child each day. If any of the symptoms or behaviors listed in the sick policy are present, we ask



families to keep children home. For your child's comfort and in an effort to reduce the risk of infection, if symptoms or behaviors manifest themselves at school, we ask that children be picked up within 1 hour of notification.

We encourage you to read the full [Student Sick Policy here](#).

### **Cleaning:**

While the CDC and state agencies have reduced the requirements for cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing to pre-COVID requirements, Little Sprouts will maintain a higher standard. This is another best practice that will remain, as we have found a decreased level of general communicable illness within in our schools.

### **Increased Hours:**

Each individual location's Executive Director will be in communication as to when hours will return to the regular window of 10 hours of care for families. We are working diligently on extending our operating hours, and we will provide an update as soon as possible. The process may take longer at various locations as we hire additional team members.

While state licensing agencies have lifted the children and staff cohort rules, it remains a best practice to keep consistency whenever possible. There are times, however, where groups of children in the same age range may combine. To extend hours of care available, groups will return to combining at the beginning and end of the day as a regular practice. Further, there are situations where staffing patterns necessitate the need to combine groups, such as when staff are absent due to vacation or illness.

### **Drop Off/ Pick Up:**

A consistent drop-off and pick-up timeframe has proven to be one of several positive best practices that have come out of the pandemic. This has allowed children and teachers to have more meaningful, consistent, and calmer starts to their daily routine. Therefore, as we extend hours, we will keep a drop-off and pick-up window of no more than 1 hour. If your child will be late due to an appointment, a call to the school notifying the staff is required. Family members picking up or dropping off outside are encouraged to wear a mask.

Each individual Executive Director will also communicate any changes to drop-off and pick-up locations. For some schools, drop-off outside the building is running well and is easier for both staff and families. In other locations, the drop-off routine is a hindrance. Your Executive Director will have a clear update as to how your location will proceed with pick-up and drop-off soon.

Further, our current late-fee policy remains in place (\$20 charge per day for pick-up that occurs 5 minutes past scheduled pick-up time, up to \$100 charged per week). As our closing routine still includes



cleaning and sanitizing, along with a need to release our teachers on time after their shift, it is imperative families arrive on time for pick-up.

### **Tours:**

For the past year, Little Sprouts provided tours to prospective families either virtually or after hours. In time, we will be returning to in-person during operating hours. All tour participants will be required to wear a mask.

We will also tour families who are currently enrolled, but have yet to see the inside of the school due to the restrictions and policies of the pandemic of the past year. If you are interested, please speak with your Executive Director, who may be able to share a sense of when in-person tours will resume at your location.

National, state, and local regulations are lifting and changing with increased frequency; as such, we anticipate this will not be the last time we update our policies. We appreciate your patience as we thoughtfully and intentionally unravel the many restrictions that have been in place over the past year.

Thank you once again for your continued partnership. We look forward to continuing to grow, play, and learn with your family.

Sincerely,

The Little Sprouts Operations Team