

It is almost time to go back to school!

One of the first things we had to do to prepare for classes to resume was to consult with state licensing. We needed to make sure we were doing everything possible to keep our kiddos, families, and staff safe and healthy while also meeting all state regulations. All centers in the state of Missouri are to continue to adhere to all licensing regulations while adding to their daily routines as many of the CDC guidelines for childcare as possible. We have reviewed all of those guidelines, and have made a number of policy changes for health and well being of all. We really feel strongly that the more cautious we start, the healthier we will be in the long run. We also feel that these changes support the lowest risk possible for all.

It is important to note that our state cleaning and health regulations are already designed with the intent to keep everyone as healthy as possible, so the regulations we are used to operating under are an excellent support to the changes we are making. That being said, there are a few changes that we feel are key to making everything work.

****Note:** We just renewed our license with the state as the closures began. We were thoroughly inspected and met all criteria to continue to operate and were granted our renewed 2 year license. During inspections, there are many things taken into account: observations in classrooms, ratios, cleaning routines, cleanliness of the facility, food service procedures, kitchen cleanliness, water temperatures, state of appliances and food storage, conditions of equipment in every room, condition of playground equipment and fall zone materials, condition of playground fencing, emergency procedures, renewed background checks on staff and volunteers, status of all files, immunization records, outlet covers...the list goes on!! If there is anything that needs corrected/updated/changed, we are given a set amount of time to get it done for licensing to revisit. In addition to state licensing inspectors, we also are inspected for fire safety by an inspector managed from Jeff City, and a health and sanitation inspector managed from Jeff City (similar to restaurant inspections.) Licenses are only granted or renewed if/when all criteria are met from all 3 inspections. Final paperwork was submitted right after the spring break week, and our license came in the mail shortly after. WHY is this all important??? Because licensing regulations and the CDC regulations help everyone in our center stay safe. And, it is from this perspective that we planned our next steps. EVERYTHING we are changing should be viewed from the utmost health and safety vantage point.

There are 2 main changes we are implementing that we feel are key to everything else. First, we will have a health check station (details of the new drop off routine will be emailed separately) at drop off time, and second, all children and staff will remain in the same stable group all day. The intent behind both of these steps is prevention. If we can prevent anyone we have health concern about from entering the building, we can effectively eliminate a large level of risk! Second, by keeping all staff and children in the same stable group all day every day, similar to how the infant and toddler rooms are already required to operate via licensing for health and safety reasons, we will be able to severely limit any potential germ spreading inside the building. Then, IF something did happen to occur, the who and the where is not in question. We LOVE that our children could play together and make friends in other rooms, and see siblings on the playground, hear library stories and visit with special guests in the past. Those ARE important things!! But, until further notice, we are simply cannot take the risk associated with large mixed groups. We hope that someday we can add those daily events back into our schedule, but when is yet to be determined.

What else are we doing? From here, please review the following list. (I have tried to be as concise and specific as possible.) Each item listed is something we are doing/changing/adding to what licensing currently requires, and each item is taken from the CDC guidelines. We understand that some of these might seem a bit excessive at first glance, but every single item is necessary at this time to LIMIT GERMS as much as possible. The teachers have started working on their rooms, and we WILL have PLENTY of fun activities for everyone!! Things will look a bit different, things will be a bit more individualized, but we will still be learning and growing, and enjoying our friends. We want to enjoy spending time with the kiddos coming back to school too! Limiting the spread of germs in our center has always been a primary focus, it is just that now all activities will be "filtered through this lens" of how to be limit germs FIRST. If the risk is deemed too great, we will change our plan altogether, or hopefully, be able to adjust accordingly.

Please feel free to email or message me or your child's teacher with any follow-up questions. Also, expect the drop off and pick up information in your inbox next. **THANK YOU!!!!** (*See page 2!!)

Lisa

- 1) All classroom groups, staff and children both, will function on their own individual daily classroom schedules and remain a stable group all day. (New schedules TBD.)
- 2) Gym/playground times are limited to one class at a time.
- 3) Teachers should have limited, socially distanced contact with each other and parents.
- 4) Any child *suspected* of being ill will be isolated FIRST, then evaluated.
- 5) NOTHING can be brought in from outside the school. Coats, backpacks, etc., will be stored inside the classrooms in cubbies. Backpacks are for project/art and change of clothes transport only. Diapering items need to be brought in bulk.
- 6) Rooms should only provide toys/play items that can be *easily* sanitized.
- 7) Toys and school items cannot be shared between rooms.
- 8) Paper items/paper toys/books in the classroom are acceptable.
- 9) Markers, pencils, scissors, playdoh, and the like should be individualized whenever possible.
- 10) Rooms should be arranged to allow as much space for child movement as possible.
- 11) Windows should be opened whenever possible.
- 12) All lunches will be delivered directly to every classroom. Meals will still be eaten in the classrooms, with children spaced out as much as possible.
- 13) Staff are only permitted in the kitchen to retrieve their personal meal, and projects needing kitchen usage must be conducted outside of lunch prep time.
- 14) Hands will be washed/sanitized upon entry to the classroom every time. Visible dirt requires soap and water washing.
- 15) Current handwashing procedures remain in place with the following additions: sanitizer is allowed if 70% alcohol or higher, sanitizer must be supervised at all times and stored out of children's reach, hands washed after touching face, hands washed after handling *any* trash items.
- 16) Disposable items are preferred, so we will return to disposable lunch items. **Sippy cups will have to be the exception.
- 17) Masks will be worn during diapering. Diapers and dirtied clothes will still be sent home "full" and placed in a Ziploc-style baggie to contain germs.
- 18) Water fountain will remain closed.
- 19) Light switches, door handles, faucets, cubbies, diaper pails, trash cans, and laundry baskets will be cleaned and sanitized DAILY (versus any previously required schedule).
- 20) Rooms will be vacuumed when empty only.
- 21) Infant-Toddler teachers will be wearing an extra shirt/layer during feeding and holding times, and will change them immediately when "secretions" (CDC wording) are present. Children's clothes will be changed immediately when "secretions" are present. Infant-toddler staff will also wear their hair up to help deter "little fingers."
- 22) Staff will be cross trained (many already are) to fill in wherever needed in case of emergency. Emergencies must take priority over any other situation.
- 23) Paperwork in the center is to be managed via email as much as possible. (Infant-toddler parents will need to let staff know their preferred method to receive daily sheets.)
- 24) Drop off and pickup times will be staggered to allow ample time to manage the health check station. (Siblings with different drop off times need to get specific instructions from Lisa. Adjustments to times for siblings will be finalized when rosters are confirmed.)