



## **Policy Addendum for COVID-19 and Public Health Emergencies of Disease Outbreaks**

**Policies subject to change:** Wild Earth Preschool policies are subject to change in response to DZM, local, and national measures. Families will be notified in writing of any change. We will operate our center in accordance with applicable regulation, including state rules, Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) emergency rules, and in accordance with CDC guidance.

### **Hours of operation and attendance options:**

- Hours of operation:
  - 8:00 am – 5:30 pm for the Academic Year session, 2020 – 2021
    - 8:00-8:30 is early arrival by appointment
    - 8:30-9:00 is general arrival
    - 9:00 am – 2:30 pm is preschool programming
    - 2:30 pm – 5:30 pm is extended preschool programming and gradual pick-up
    - A late fee will be charged after 5:45 pm

### **Enrollment priority for Academic Year Session:**

Due to the pandemic, typical enrollment patterns are interrupted. However, when space is limited enrollment opportunities will be provided in the following order:

1. Families previously enrolled in Wild Earth Preschool
2. DZM staff requesting enrollment
3. Families on the wait list according to the order of the list
4. Families on the interest list according to the order of the list

Wild Earth Preschool reserves the right to provide selective admission criteria during the public health emergency.

### **Immunizations:**

In addition to immunization records required by the state, Wild Earth Preschool requires a flu shot by November 1 or admission date during flu season for each child and staff member. When Covid-19 immunizations are widely available, they will also be required. As permitted by Texas Health and Human Services, an affidavit for exclusion due to medical reasons will be accepted, but we reserve the right to exclude a child or staff member who has not received the required vaccinations due to reasons of conscience during an emergency or epidemic.

### **Communication of absences:**

When the child does not attend class, the parent or guardian will communicate the reason for absence to the Early Childhood Manager. This communication allows for guidance on readmission criteria, when applicable. Attendance is not mandatory, and children may be absent at the discretion of the parent.



### **Agreement to reduce risk:**

- The household and the preschool staff agree to avoid unnecessary exposure to the coronavirus that causes Covid-19 by following CDC and Dallas county guidance, including restricting public interactions to those in which masks are worn when 6 feet of distance cannot be maintained.
- Family travel and events that involve the child's or staff member's potential exposure may be subject to up to a 14-day quarantine for observation before returning to care. We recommend that parents or guardians consult with the Early Childhood Manager before travel to assess risk and response. Preschool staff will consult with DZM administrators prior to travel.
- Wild Earth Preschool requires quarantine for secondary exposure as well as primary. This means that if a member of the household quarantines for primary exposure, the child or staff member will quarantine as well.

### **Weather policy:**

Our program is centered on outdoor learning for its health benefits; however, we will have class indoors when weather presents a safety risk or causes stress to the children, such as lightning, wind chills below 30 degrees, torrential rain, heat indexes above 100 degrees, etc. In these cases, we will send a message through our Brightwheel app that classes will be contained indoors for the duration of the weather event.

### **Temporary program closure:**

During community outbreaks of COVID-19, Wild Earth Preschool may be required to close by local, regional, or state regulatory governance or may need to close due to lack of available staff. In these cases, tuition will be paused and the Zoo's learn-at-home curriculum, Playful Zoology, may be offered at no additional fee for up to 2 weeks. If the closure lasts longer than 2 weeks, families may choose to continue the preschool-at-home program at program cost.

### **Termination and pay arrangements during a public health emergency:**

Termination of enrollment by Wild Earth Preschool may occur at any time without prior notice if a program/ family mismatch is identified due to safety concerns; policy infractions; payment default; or inability to rectify differences in philosophy of care. In this case, tuition will be discontinued on the date after termination of care.

Termination by family choice requires written notification one month in advance.

Alternative payment arrangements may be available in cases of family financial emergencies. Contact the program director, Katie Grimes, if circumstances arise.



### **Visitors/Volunteers:**

- Volunteers or interns that have the undergone the appropriate background check, orientation, and/or training will be utilized only when necessary to meet Wild Earth Preschool operational needs such as staffing support when Dallas County community risk levels are “moderate” and lower, and will be limited to one volunteer per classroom group. These persons will receive a daily health screening prior to entering classroom or administrative areas.
- During hours of operation, permission to enter the licensed areas of the child care center will be restricted to necessary business, and all persons will receive a health screening prior to entering.

### **Staffing pattern and substitutes:**

- Teaching staff who are supervising children will primarily stay within eyesight and/or earshot of another teaching staff member, and they will be in contact by radio.
- When necessary to step away (like when taking children to the restroom) staff will abide by the “rule of 3” ensuring that there are at least 3 people in a group. This could be one teacher and two children or two teachers and one child.
- Substitute teaching staff will be Dallas Zoo program staff who have background check clearance and are qualified as caregivers for the preschool. When possible, the staff member with the least external job-related exposure to people will be selected.

### **Plans for field trips and animal interactions:**

- Preschool visits to the guest areas and animal habitat areas of the Zoo may occur on a limited basis when social distancing can be maintained and regulation allows. They may be suspended at our discretion or due to the decision of any of the governing bodies that regulate the operations of the Zoo and/or preschool.
- Interaction with Zoo program animals will be in accordance with applicable regulation and DZM policy, and will ensure that social distancing can be maintained between children; between the teaching staff and the children; and between any mammal and the children.

### **Plans to implement social distancing strategies:**

- Group size and make up:
  - Wild Earth Preschool will meet or exceed state minimum requirements during the emergency.
  - To the extent possible, a single classroom group will remain together throughout the day, remain with the same caregivers, and stay separated from other classroom groups.
  - Groups may be combined due to reduced staffing, or in the event of an emergency such as lightning, a tornado, or a physical threat.
  - Wild Earth Preschool reserves the right to not fill classes to the maximum capacity.
- Use of outdoor learning environments:
  - Classes will utilize outdoor learning environments to the greatest extent possible, subject to safe weather conditions. Outdoor learning environments include the “forest” area, Monarch Mountain, the Wild Earth Preschool playground, and other spaces on Zoo property that can be used with the exclusion of Zoo guests.
  - The preschool playground will be cleaned between groups of children.

- Visits to guest areas of the Zoo will be limited to times when guest attendance is low enough that social distancing can easily be maintained.
- Traveling in groups/lining up
  - Place markers and physical assists such as pool noodles will be used during group travel to maintain 6' distancing.
- Modified use of indoor environments
  - Use of the indoor classroom environment will be modified to provide more individualized and distanced learning activities.
    - The restroom area in classroom T7 will be occupied by a maximum of 2 children at a time: 1 for each restroom and/or sink.
- Intentional programming for social distancing
  - Daily activity planning will reflect intentional preparation to engage the children while reasonably maintaining social distancing. Use of child-appropriate materials and equipment such as bandanas, yoga mats, vinyl place markers, hula hoops, flags, cones, etc. will be incorporated to guide boundaries.
  - Teaching staff will incorporate lessons that model, practice, and reinforce social distancing using child appropriate methods such as games and imaginary play.
- Use of facial coverings:
  - Indoors: Staff are required to wear facial coverings in all indoor environments when other people are present, with the exception of eating or drinking, which will be done at a minimum of 6 foot distance from other people. This requirement is emphasized for children, with the understanding that guidance will be needed. Children's facial coverings will also be removed when they are napping.
  - Outdoors: Staff are required to wear facial coverings when less than 6 feet away from other people in outdoor learning environments, and in accordance with DZM policy. The requirement is emphasized for children, with the understanding that guidance will be needed.
- Responsive caregiving:
  - For injuries, illness, medication administration, and emergencies: Staff is required to wear a facial covering, and plastic facial shields will be provided. The child is required to wear a facial covering except when its use causes distress that prevents care. Close contact will likely be necessary.
  - Calming: To the greatest extent possible, teaching staff will utilize non-contact methods of helping the child through self-regulation. These methods include humor, deep breathing techniques, glitter bottles, identification of emotions, etc.
  - Restroom Assistance: Children should be able to use the restroom independently including wiping. In the case of an infrequent accident (less than 1 time per week), staff will wear gloves and a mask; assist the child per minimum standard regulation; and thoroughly clean and disinfect the bathroom afterward.
  - Change of clothing: Teaching staff and children will change clothes anytime they are soiled with bodily secretions. They will also wash with soap and water any part of their body that is touched by secretions.

**Provision of an aide:** If a child requires more physical contact by a caregiver than described in this section to regularly maintain self-regulation, safety, and/or functioning



within the group, the family may provide a personal aide for the child. Care will be discontinued until the aide is provided.

**Termination of care:** If a safety or health risk cannot be quickly rectified, the program director will meet with the family to counsel them about other options for child care, and enrollment in Wild Earth Preschool will be terminated.

**Plans to intensify cleaning and disinfection efforts:**

- Safety in regards to cleaning chemicals
  - Hand sanitizer will be kept out of reach of children
  - Cleaning chemicals will be kept in locked cabinets, backpacks, or boxes when not in a teacher's hands.
  - When not immediately necessary (for example cleaning tables before eating), disinfection will be done when children are not present, and rooms will be ventilated.
  - Selected disinfecting chemicals will be EPA regulated for use against the novel coronavirus, and will be one of the most child-friendly, environmental-friendly options available.
  - Wild Earth Preschool staff will do all routine cleaning and disinfecting to avoid use of staff that is shared with guest services of the Zoo.
  - DZM will apply a disinfecting mist for all contacted areas if a positive case is identified in the preschool. This application will meet regulatory standards for pathogen control and environmental health.
- Handwashing:
  - Extra attention to handwashing policies and practice will be intensified through the use of pictograph signage, supervision by the director, and training/retraining as necessary.
  - Outdoor Learning Environments: Portable handwashing stations with soap and water will be available in outdoor learning environments. When soap and water are not available, hands will be washed with wet wipes, and hand sanitizer will be used for both children and staff.
- Learning materials/play materials:
  - When feasible, children will use individual materials and equipment or shared items that will be cleaned and sanitized before and after use.
  - Shared materials will be cleaned and sanitized between groups.
  - Some materials that cannot be easily disinfected, such as books or wooden toys, will be cleaned and taken out of rotation between groups for a period of at least 36 hours.
  - Soft and hard to clean items such as pillows and stuffed animals that cannot be laundered will not be used.
- High touch areas
  - High touch areas such as bathrooms, faucets, door handles, light switches, etc. will be frequently cleaned and disinfected throughout the day with wipes and/or spray.
- Outdoor areas:
  - Natural outdoor areas, including the wooden picnic tables, sticks, rocks, soil, and plants will be kept neat and clean, but will not be sanitized or disinfected, as per CDC recommendation.

- Teaching staff supplies and equipment
  - Teaching staff will clean, sanitize, or disinfect as recommended by the CDC all touched supplies and equipment after use, including electronics, phones, walkie-talkies, shared locks or keys, staff restroom fixtures, staff lunch areas, etc.

### **Plans to modify drop off and pick up procedures**

- Gradual arrival and dismissal: Arrival and dismissal will occur gradually over a period of time to avoid gatherings.
- Location: Drop off and pick up will occur outside of the classroom.
- Designated person: 1 authorized adult per car is recommended, and a facial covering is required when speaking to or interacting with a staff member. When possible, we recommend that the same person be designated for drop off and pick up. We recommend that families avoid having high-risk family members in the car during drop off and pick up.
- Procedure:
  - The adult dropping off or picking up will wear a facial covering and will stay in or near the car whenever possible.
  - The adult will ensure the child has their initial application of sunscreen and insect repellent; take the child's temperature on premises and provide that reading to the receiving staff member; answer screening questions; allow the receiving staff to visually check the child for signs of wellness, and sign the child into care through their Brightwheel account on their cell phone after the receiving staff member has confirmed all conditions are met. If the app is not available, paper and pencil will be used.
  - The receiving staff member will receive the child; disinfect the exterior of the lunch box, water bottle, and any other necessary belongings; ensure the child's hands and their own hands are washed (or wipe with a wet wipe and provide hand sanitizer), and supervise the child to their group.
  - When picking up, the designated adult will remain in or near the car when possible; the staff member will verify the adult's identity and authorization to pick up, and supervise the child to the car. The designated adult will sign the child out, using the Brightwheel account on their cell phone. If the app is not available, paper and pencil will be used.

### **Plans to implement screening procedures:**

- Staff members will be screened by a supervisor according to DZM guidelines and Texas Minimum Standards for Child Care prior to entering the preschool classroom or joining a staff meeting. This screening will be documented.
- Temperature screening for children: When possible the designated adult who drops off the child will take the child's temperature with a digital read thermometer, and the receiving staff member will verify that the temperature reads less than 100.0 for a temporal measurement, according to the thermometer manufacturer's instructions. The designated adult may use their own thermometer, or they may use one that has been disinfected and provided by the preschool.



- The parent will respond to the screening questions provided in the Brightwheel app and alert the receiving staff member of any concerns. Children will not be accepted into care if any of the following conditions are present:
  - Fever of 100.0 F or higher, taken with a temporal thermometer
  - Any sign or symptom of respiratory illness including cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, or sore throat
  - Any other signs of illness including headache, muscle pain, diarrhea, vomiting, fatigue
  - Close contact in the last 14 days with a person who has confirmed or suspected Covid-19, or any undiagnosed respiratory illness.
  - Anyone in the child’s household has had close contact with a person who has a confirmed COVID-19 case in 14 days
  - The child has traveled within the last 14 days to any restricted area
- Upon confirmation, the receiving staff member will stand at a distance from the child and observe them for signs of illness such as flushed cheeks, rapid breathing, or difficulty breathing, fatigue, or unusual fussiness.
- The receiving staff member reserves the right to take a second reading with the preschool’s thermometer, while standing behind the car window as barrier, and using disposable gloves.
- If any of the above health concerns are present, the child will not be accepted for care until criteria for re-entry are met.
- The receiving staff member will document the health screening and will receive the child.
- Families will communicate any health concerns to the Assistant Supervisor or Early Childhood Manager, including suspected exposure and/or family exposure so we may consult with health authorities.

### **Exclusionary Policy for personal symptoms of COVID-19**

The following policy is in addition to Wild Earth Preschool’s current exclusionary policy for illness and supersedes it.

Anyone known to have symptoms of COVID-19 or a respiratory infection will not be permitted to enter the preschool, the preschool administration office, or have direct contact with staff or children who are on premises during hours of care. **Re-admission will require either a medical professional’s note or 10 days of exclusion and resolution of symptoms (see criteria for return, below).**

Symptoms of COVID-19 include cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat, loss of taste or smell, diarrhea, feeling feverish.

- **Children or preschool staff with symptoms:** Isolate at home according to CDC guidelines. Individuals and enrolled household members will not be admitted until criteria for return are met.
- **Parents/caregivers/household members with symptoms:** Isolate the sick family member at home according to CDC guidelines. Do not bring your child(ren) to preschool until both the household member and the child meet criteria for return.
- **If symptoms first present while at preschool:** The child will be immediately removed to a room in the preschool administration building (T1) where they will be isolated from the group until they can go home. Children will be supervised from a distance of at least 6 feet by preschool

staff. Both will wear face coverings. Medical masks will be used if available. If an additional staff member is not available, the child will be isolated in a space in the classroom that will not be used by others.

- An authorized pick-up must arrive within 1 hour of being notified by the school. Failure to do so may result in termination of enrollment.
- The child will be excluded from care until return criteria are met
- Staff exhibiting symptoms of illness may leave immediately after ensuring the class is supervised. They may use the isolation room in T1 if waiting for a ride home.
- **Emergency symptoms of COVID-19** include trouble breathing, persistent pain or pressure in the chest, new confusion, inability to wake or stay awake, bluish lips or face. In case of any of these symptoms, preschool staff will radio call AMR (our onsite paramedics) and 911.

#### **Criteria for return after COVID symptoms or a positive COVID test result:**

- We will follow up to date health department guidance for criteria to return after COVID symptoms. In the lack of health department guidance, we will follow up to date CDC, state, and licensing information. Current guidance is provided below:
  - Medical professional's note for return: A child or staff member who has been ill or who becomes ill while at preschool may return to the preschool when they have a medical professional's note that clears them for return based on a diagnosis that is not COVID-19.
  - Recovery from COVID-19 symptoms: Without the diagnosis from a medical professional, the criteria for return include ALL of the following
    - At least 10 days have passed since symptoms first appeared
    - 3 days (72 hours) have passed since resolution of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication
    - Improvement in respiratory symptoms

#### **Exclusionary policy for close contact with someone lab confirmed to have COVID-19:**

- **Children or preschool staff** who are not sick but have had known close contact (as defined by the local health department) to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19: must self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of exposure before returning to the preschool. During those 14 days, they should monitor their health for the above symptoms. If symptoms present, refer to "Criteria to return after COVID-19 Symptoms." This may include a child whose parent is diagnosed with COVID-19 or a staff member whose household member is diagnosed.
  - **A negative COVID-19 test** may be accepted for return before the 14 day quarantine is met, under guidance of the health department.
- **Parents or authorized pick-ups** who are not sick but have had known close contact (as defined by the local health department) to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 must not pick up the child from preschool or be in the car when the child is picked up from preschool until quarantine criteria are met.

#### **Procedure for a lab-confirmed case of COVID-19 among staff or children:**

- **For enrolled children or staff:** Contact Katie Grimes as soon as possible to disclose the diagnosis.





- We will report the diagnosis to the Dallas Zoo safety officer, local health authorities, and our child care licensing agent. We will work directly with the health department on the next steps which will likely include a closure of our operation of at least 2-5 days to assess the situation, provide deep cleaning, and determine the next steps.
- It is likely that our preschool will be closed for up to 14 days for quarantine of staff and children due to the small size and nature of our program.
- Maintaining your confidentiality, we will inform families of enrolled children that a case has been identified. We will also inform the Dallas Zoo's Senior Director of Education, and the Dallas Zoo's HR department.
- **For household members of enrolled children or staff:** Follow exclusionary policy for close contact (above). Contact Early Childhood Manager, Katie Grimes, so we can take necessary precautions. Communication to enrolled families, and Dallas Zoo senior administration will be based on current regulatory guidance. At this time, program notification is required for a positive case among children or staff only.
- **Upon a confirmed case among children or staff in the center,** we will notify families to pick up their children from care as soon as possible, within 1 hour.
  - If weather permits, children in care will be taken outside until they are picked up, and areas used by the sick person will be closed off.
  - Doors and windows will be opened to increase air circulation
  - All areas used by the sick person will be cleaned and disinfected after 24 hours.
  - Other guidance by CDC and the local health authorities will be followed.

**We thank you for partnering with us in the care of your child during the pandemic. Through open communication and cooperation, we will be able to provide a safe, healthy, enriching, and dependable program for our community of families.**

Please reach out with any questions or concerns to:

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