

Earthplace Preschool Operating Procedures for 2020/2021



The Earthplace Preschool has been an integral part of Earthplace, Inc., our parent organization since 1967. The Director of Early Childhood Education is a member of the Earthplace, Inc. Senior Leadership Team. (SLT) The members of the SLT along with input from members of the Board of Trustees, the Earthplace Preschool Staff, and Preschool Families, have worked diligently to develop our plan to operate safely during this pandemic. Continued cooperation is vital to our success. We are all in this together.

New Preschool Operating Procedures in Response to Covid 19:

Group Sizes/ Dynamics

- Group size shall remain the same for children under the age of three (8 children per group with a minimum 1:4 teacher to child ratio).
- For children age three and up, group size will have a maximum of 16 children with three teachers.
- Students will not interact with other groups of children indoors or outdoors.
- Each group has an assigned bathroom, and bathrooms will be sanitized in between each use.

Executive Order Regarding Travel

Pursuant to Governor Lamont's [Executive Order No. 7III](#), anyone traveling into Connecticut from a state that has a new daily positive test rate higher than 10 per 100,000 residents or a state with a 10% or higher positivity rate over a 7-day rolling average are directed to self-quarantine for a 14-day period from the time of last contact within the identified state.

In addition, anyone entering from one of the identified states must fill out a travel health form upon arrival. Travelers can fill out the form online at ct.gov/travelform.

As of July 21, 2020 there are a total of 31 states that meet the criteria and are included in Connecticut's travel advisory. Please click the [link](#) to view the full list which is updated regularly

Please Note:

- **Earthplace will not accept the "testing alternative" to this Executive Order.**
- **Earthplace considers anyone who is hosting any individuals from an affected state in their home a risk to the rest of the Earthplace community.**
- **Anyone who has traveled to an affected state or who has guests from an affected state must quarantine for 14 days.**
- **No refunds will be given for missed time due to travel and subsequent quarantine. This policy is in effect for all families and staff members.**

When Outside:

Within our 62 acres, we have identified nine [Nature Zones](#) for play and exploration in addition to the fenced playground areas. Each group will be assigned daily areas and movements. They include:

1. Goldenrod Meadow, climbing trees and Frog Hollow Pond
2. Stoney Brook from the Wolf Trail balance beam, downstream to the platform bench
3. Big Rock Junction, Discovery Trail and Amphitheater
4. Nature trail walks-Upper Swamp Loop, High Woods, and Meadow Grass
5. The Bear statue Field for lawn games and running around
6. The Parkour Playground and Pine grove for arts and crafts
7. The Newman-Woodward trails and Jurassic Junction
8. The Wadsworth trail, vernal pond and Arboretum
9. Birds of Prey Exhibit

When Inside:

Every group will have a dedicated homebase classroom with outside entrance. Only assigned staff will be in the classroom and all toys and crafts will stay within the group.

Social Distancing Measures

Appropriate social distancing strategies shall be implemented. Please see the document titled: [Guidance for Childcare During COVID-19](#). Social distancing is required and will take many forms including wearing masks, reduced group sizes, staggered drop-off and pick-up times to ensure groups of students remain isolated from one another indoors and out.

- Teachers and staff must wear a face covering at all times unless outside and can keep a distance of 6 feet.
- Children in a child care environment and those with medical conditions are not required to wear a mask.

Enhanced Cleaning and Disinfection Precautions

Earthplace, a licensed and accredited preschool and summer camp program, is held to the highest standards of safety and cleanliness for all classroom and public spaces. Our program spaces are sanitized, and disinfected daily in accordance with the state Office of Early Childhood (OEC), the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), and the American Association of Pediatrics (AAP) [guidelines](#).

Daily Health Screenings

Daily Health Screenings will be performed at drop-off.

- Each health screener will make a visual inspection of the child for signs of illness, which could include flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (without recent physical activity), fatigue, muscle pain, rash, or extreme fussiness, and confirm that the child is not experiencing coughing or shortness of breath.
- The health screener will take the child's temperature. If a child has a temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher, he or she will not be permitted at school.

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- Symptoms will be recorded on the [paper attendance form](#) or the CampDoc digital health form.

Enhanced Health and Wellness Policy

If someone becomes sick or exhibits any symptoms of COVID-19 including fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea while at Earthplace Preschool:

- The child's parents will be notified
- The child must be picked up within 30 minutes and must be evaluated by his or her pediatrician or healthcare provider.
- Please follow the healthcare provider's instructions for exclusion from, or return to, the program.
- The child must be cleared by his or her healthcare provider and must have a note from the healthcare provider before he or she can return to Earthplace.
- The other children in the classroom will be taken outdoors, if weather permits, while the classroom is cleaned and sanitized.
- Earthplace will contact the Westport/Weston Health District, and we will follow their instructions.
- If the sick person is a staff member, the staff member will remain at home for the remainder of the week or longer according to the healthcare provider's instructions. Staff members must also be cleared by their healthcare provider and must have a note from the healthcare provider before they can return to Earthplace.
- All parents in the program will be notified and will receive further instructions.
- Confidentiality will be maintained.

COVID-19/Earthplace Preschool Information & FAQ's

When will the Earthplace Preschool Reopen?

The Preschool will reopen on Monday, August 31st for full-time childcare students and on Tuesday, September 8th for part-time students to allow additional time to prepare our learning environments. Please see the updated program calendars for [full-time and part-time](#) programs. Should public health guidelines change our plan, we will alert families as soon as possible.

The most important thing to remember is we are all in this together. A successful reopening is contingent upon the behavior of our community members including preschool families, teachers, and Earthplace employees to suppress the spread of COVID-19. That includes reporting any coronavirus symptoms listed by the CDC, reporting possible exposure, reporting travel to states that meet the criteria for the [regional travel advisory](#), and abiding by the policies set forth by Earthplace Preschool and the Westport/Weston Health District.

Should I be confident in sending my child to school at this point in time?

Last spring, Earthplace made the decision to close its preschool program and suspend all in-person operations because our state was unprepared for this pandemic. We lacked sufficient testing to guide decision-making and we lacked the PPE needed in order to operate safely.

The conditions in the state of Connecticut are very different now. This summer we have proven that we are able to operate the preschool and summer camp in a manner that meets or exceeds the guidelines set forth by the Office of the Governor and the Office of Early Childhood.

We recognize that children need to be outdoors, to interact socially, and to have enriching hands-on experiences. Earthplace has ample space indoors and outdoors to follow social distancing recommendations, and we have highly trained and professional staff members who will implement our plan as outlined below. Our job is to mitigate risk of infection to the greatest extent possible by meeting or exceeding all state health guidelines for each program.

What are the hours of operation?

Our hours of operation will be:

- 8:00 am to 4:00 pm Full-Day Childcare for Infants
- 8:00 am to 6:00 pm Full-Day Childcare for Toddlers and Preschoolers
- 9:00 am to 12:45 pm Part-Day Preschool for Toddlers and Twos
- 8:45 am to 1:00 pm Part-Day Preschool for Children Ages Three to Five

Daily Health Screenings will be performed at drop-off including temperature checks, and health

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related questions.

Will there be any changes to classes and groups?

Yes. Each class group will now have a maximum of 16 children and each class group will be isolated from the other groups to reduce unnecessary contact. This means that classes will need to be reorganized:

- Full-time childcare students will be grouped together:
 - Infants and toddlers in the Nest classroom
 - 2 and 3-year-olds in the Chickadees classroom
 - 3 to 5-year-olds in the Orioles classroom
 - These groups will be dismissed at 6:00 pm
- Part-time preschool students will be grouped as follows:
 - 3 and 4-year-olds in the Blue Jay and Meadowlark classrooms and in the Auditorium
 - 4 and 5-year-olds in the Barn Owl classroom
 - These groups will be dismissed at 1:00 pm

Will there be Extended Day?

Unfortunately, we can no longer offer Extended Day on a per diem basis.

Will there be a tuition increase?

No increase is planned. Earthplace Preschool has decided to absorb the increased operating costs associated with following state guidelines for smaller class sizes, increased PPE, and cleaning supplies. We are not going to pass on these costs at this time, and are grateful for your continued support of our program.

Will the Earthplace building be open to the public during the 2020-2021 school year?

In order to implement social distancing policies and to prioritize the safety of our students and staff, the Earthplace building will be closed to the public during school hours. There may be limited public access to Animal Hall and NaturePlace from the exterior entrances on weekday afternoons and on weekends .

What will happen if there is a confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in the preschool program?

We will follow the practices below as directed by state and local health officials:

- Contact the Westport/Weston Health District and follow their instructions.
- Determine the date of symptom onset for the child/staff member.
- Determine if the child/staff member attended/worked at the program while symptomatic or during the two days before symptoms began.
- Identify what days the child/staff member attended/worked during that time.
- Determine who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days.
- Notify anyone who had close contact with the child/staff member at the program during those days.
- Exclude the children and staff members who are determined to have had close contact with the affected child/staff member for 14 days after the last day they had contact with the affected child/staff member.

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- Conduct appropriate cleaning and disinfection:
 - Close off areas used by the person who is sick.
 - Open outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the areas.
 - Wait up to 24 hours or as long as possible before cleaning or disinfecting to allow respiratory droplets to settle before cleaning and disinfecting.
 - Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person who is sick, such as offices, bathrooms, and common areas.
 - If more than 7 days have passed since the person who is sick visited or used the facility, additional cleaning and disinfection is not necessary.
 - Continue routine cleaning and disinfection.
 - Depending on the size of the program and the number of people affected, closure of a particular room or rooms in the program or the entire program might need to be considered.

Will tuition be refunded if the closure of a particular classroom in the program or the entire program is deemed to be necessary by the Earthplace Board or a local, state, or federal government agency?

- In the event of a temporary closure of one or more classrooms lasting 14 days or less due to the COVID-19 pandemic, there will be no tuition refunds.
- If the entire preschool is ordered to close by the Earthplace Board, a federal, state, or local government agency for a duration longer than 14 days due to the COVID-19 pandemic or other hazardous conditions beyond the reasonable control of Earthplace, a prorated refund of 50% of the unused portion of tuition payments will be offered.

Will there be distance learning in the event of a shut down?

- In the event that there is a short-term closure of a particular classroom in the program or the entire program lasting two weeks or less, curriculum materials will be provided.
- In the unlikely event that Earthplace is ordered to close by the Earthplace Board, a federal, state, or local government agency for a duration longer than 14 days, teachers will conduct online meetings for a total of 60 minutes per week and videos and curriculum materials will be provided.

Will Earthplace close its Preschool program if public schools are closed?

No. Earthplace is a state licensed Childcare facility that is regarded by the state of CT as an essential service. We have designed our operating plan to meet or exceed all state requirements and our staff are following all indoor and outdoor guidelines. As an organization we have prioritized the safety of the preschool families and the continued operation of the preschool.

Will there be any new forms to complete?

Yes. We have a new [Earthplace Preschool Contract](#) & Informed Consent form.

Per the Office of Early Childhood, Preschools and Childcare Programs shall inform and obtain signed consent on the [form](#) posted on the OEC website from all staff and the parent(s) of all children enrolled that they have received notice of the following:

- People who are 65 years and older and people of any age who have serious underlying

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medical conditions or are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are recommended to stay at home. A list of medical conditions associated with a higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 can be found in the CDC's guidance. Individuals and families should consult their healthcare providers to determine whether they have medical conditions that place them at risk.

- Staff and children living in households with individuals who are 65 years and older OR have a higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19 are recommended to stay home.