Clark Fork School; Guidance for Prevention & Response to COVID-19

Clark Fork School is working closely with Missoula City County Health Department, Montana Department of Health and Human Services, and other local public/private schools to stay informed and up-to-date as the COVID-19 situation unfolds. We feel that it is important to be aware of preventative measures, as well as have a plan in place for the potential impact on our community. To this end, we are sharing the following information.

Coronavirus and Early Childhood Centers
As you may know, symptoms vary across populations. For those who are typically healthy and within certain age groups, symptoms will appear mild, if they appear at all. However, those who are considered higher-risk (auto-immune, low-immunity due to age, history of respiratory illness, and those who are pregnant) may develop complications if the virus is contracted.

Within the Clark Fork School community, we have members who fall into this higher-risk category. For this reason, we are adopting the following proactive guidelines to slow and contain the transmission based on recommendations from several health authorities.

Coronavirus or COVID-19 is a new respiratory disease, and we are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The virus is spread from person-to-person and spreads through droplets that have virus, either by close contact with people who are infected with the virus or through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It can also spread if someone touches a surface contaminated with the virus and then touches their nose, mouth, or eyes. This makes early childhood centers the ideal environment for rapid spread.

At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy (see “What families can do” below). COVID-19 presents with fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Symptoms usually present 2-14 days after exposure. The Missoula City County Health Department (MCCHD) is encouraging Early Childhood Centers to continue with precautions outlined in the Montana Child Care Center Rules.

Clark Fork School Guidelines
CFS guidelines are based on current knowledge of COVID-19. As additional information becomes available about the virus, how it spreads, and how severe it is, these guidelines may be updated. CFS will work with local health officials to determine any additional course of action.

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In the event one of the following measures is put into place, parents will be informed via our school email, social media, and website. Currently, CFS follows a strict cleaning and sanitation routine set forth by our state’s Child Care Center Rules.

**Daily Measures**
- **Daily Health Status Checks**: upon entry into the classroom, teachers are trained to perform daily health checks as they greet students each day to notice signs of early illness. All classrooms have been equipped with thermometers to promptly check for fever if a child shows any signs of illness upon entry during this daily check.
- **Absence Tracking**: For risk management, CFS will track all student absences including date of absence and kind of illness.
- **Frequent Cleaning and Disinfection of Surfaces**: Classrooms use a bleach water solution to frequently target surfaces such as doorknobs, tables, faucet handles, toilets, floors, counter tops, chairs and toys. In addition to classroom routines, CFS has increased its cleaning services, including additional deep cleaning and wiping down high traffic zones.
- **Monitor Healthy Hygiene**: We are paying close attention to proper handwashing. This includes washing with soap and water for at least 20-seconds—especially after using the restroom, before eating, and after coughing, sneezing or blowing noses. This also includes keeping watch for kids putting fingers in their mouths and reminding them not to touch their eyes or nose.
- **CFS Sick Policy**: We are adhering to a strict illness and exclusion policy.

**What families can do to help prevent the spreading of illness**
- Wash the hands of yourself and your child with soap and water each day at drop off.
- Stay home when showing signs of illness, except to get medical care. When we are ill, our immune systems are weaker and this could increase risk of contracting other illnesses.
- Separate yourself as much as possible from other people in your home to prevent spreading the illness to them.
- Please call your provider before visiting and let them know you may have COVID-19. Wear a face mask if you have symptoms of COVID-19 while going to seek medical care.
- Wash your hands frequently, especially after using the bathroom, and after coughing, sneezing, or using a tissue.

**Travel**
If you have travel plans, the MCCHD recommends visiting the CDC’s website for guidance. Travel recommendations will continue to evolve. Our health department is encouraging people not to travel to areas at increased risk. Recognize that advisories may change during your trip to include your destination or layover locations. When making travel decisions, you not only need
to think about the risk of getting COVID-19, but also how your return travel and daily activities may be affected once you get home.

If your family travels to a country or state with widespread COVID-19 cases, we encourage you to call the Health Department at 406-258-3896 when you return. The following is a link to travel information: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html)

In particular, the Health Department is concerned about those who may have traveled to the five countries with sustained or widespread COVID-19 cases, including China, Italy, South Korea, Japan, and Iran. Please note that the countries of concern may change.

**What to Expect if the Coronavirus Presents in our Community**

1. If the Missoula Community has any confirmed cases of COVID-19, CFS will immediately suspend all field trips and extracurricular activities for both daytime and kids niche after-school programming until further directed by MCCHD.
   a. For special programming with destinations in other regions in Montana, CFS will cancel or postpone the activity based on the rising concern over COVID-19 in order to protect our communities, staff, and participants.

2. If any CFS employee or child is exposed through a family member or notified of exposure through other route (i.e. symptomatic parents, siblings, house guest, travel, event, activity, etc.), that employee or child will remain at home for 14 days in observation for symptoms, or until a health official has cleared that person to return to our facility.

3. If CFS has a confirmed case of COVID-19, we will seek specific guidance from local health officials regarding cancellation decisions, to determine if, when and for how long we will need to take that step. Dismissals may be recommended for 14 days or possibly longer if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (i.e. geographic scope, duration) may change as the local situation changes
   a. During a time of closure, parents are strongly urged to take all measures possible to maintain quarantine in hopes of preventing additional exposure and closures.
   b. During a time of closure, CFS will follow the recommendation of local health officials in order to appropriately deep clean and sanitize the school.
   c. If a child or employee develops symptoms after being exposed or if they have tested positive, they will not be able to return to CFS until they have met all of the following:

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School Closure

If the Missoula City County Health Department directs child care centers to close in order to contain the spread of the virus, then CFS will close until given the appropriate permission to re-open. CFS will also follow the status of Missoula County Public School System and other local public/private schools serving similar demographics. Staffing shortages may also cause the need for families to put back-up care into place. Decisions to reopen will be assessed on an ongoing basis.

In the case that CFS must close, our monthly tuition for both daytime and after-school programming will remain intact as we feel it is of the utmost importance to retain our teachers who care for our families and maintain ongoing expenses of our school facility. Decisions regarding tuition for ongoing or repeated closures will be assessed in conjunction with the Board of Directors and other officials at that time.

As of March 12th, MCCHD is not recommending cancellation of events, school closure or stopping normal activities. However, communities across the country are experiencing rapid changes once positive cases are determined, and CFS feels it’s critical to be proactive at a time like this. CFS will continue to keep a pulse rising concerns and create plans for the following possibilities:

- **Change of events during spring break**: CFS will continue to assess the unfolding of events on a day-to-day basis over spring break to determine an appropriate course of action, such as an potential closure starting the Monday after spring break. CFS will communicate any rapid changes to our community as quickly as possible, so families can plan accordingly. We understand, and take seriously, that any closure or extended exclusion period can be a hardship to your family.
  - The CDC recommends parents prepare if schools temporarily close by talking with your employer about sick leave and telework options in case you need to stay home with your child(ren), and consider planning for alternate childcare arrangements.

- **Annual Auction**: The fundraising committee is investigating possible solutions to potential impacts of our biggest fundraising event of the year. Our public event is scheduled for March 28th, and will be postponed to a later date, with communications and details to follow.

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Please understand that these preventative and aggressive measures are being put in place to protect the most vulnerable members of our community. We encourage your family to create a back-up plan in case of school closure, and most importantly – help with preventative measures.

**Resources**
Please stay informed and up-to-date through the following resources:

- [Missoula City County Health Department](#)
- [Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services](#)
- [State of Montana Coronavirus Task Force](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#)
  - [Facts About COVID-19](#)
  - [Frequently Asked Questions for COVID-19 and Children](#)
  - [Checklist for Teachers, Parents, and Administrators](#)
  - [Talking with children about Coronavirus Disease 2019: Messages for parents, school staff, and others working with children](#)

**Special Considerations**
If you or your family has a special health consideration or would like to request an accommodation to the aforementioned guidelines, please email [director@clarkforkschool.org](mailto:director@clarkforkschool.org) or call the office at 406-728-3395.