

The Cottage Garden

Health and Safety Protocols, Updated Illness and COVID-19-Related Policy addendum for 2020-21

Thank you for your patience as we have worked to create our plans for reopening this fall. We are very much looking forward to opening our program again for you and your children. As seniors, and as caregivers, we are also very much aware of the mindfulness necessary in taking this step forward. Our policies, stated further on in this document, will be strictly enforced for all of our sakes. Those of you who have been with us previously know that we sometimes relaxed our policies for your sakes; now, we will hold them tighter for the same reason—as well as for protecting ourselves.

The Cottage Garden will open this fall for three days per week, on Mondays, Tuesdays and Wednesdays. We have looked to local, state, and national organizations for guidance in developing our initial re-entry plan. This plan is subject to change depending on the requirements of state and federal guidelines. The following is our initial reopening plan, which, as stated, will be adapted and modified in response to regulations and guidance from public health and education agencies, including the Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC), the Massachusetts Department of Health (MDH), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and our local public health department. The goal of our reopening plan is to protect the health and safety of us all. We will be cleaning and sanitizing more than usual, using Melaleuca's Sol-U-Guard, a non-toxic, EPA approved disinfectant as well as our usual Lifestree, all-purpose cleaner, with tea tree oil and lavender. We have fragrance free hand sanitizer and Seventh Generation and plain alcohol disinfecting wipes. We now have an outside sink with a faucet, and for our new families' information, we have both a contactless faucet and soap dispenser in our bathroom.

It is most important for everyone to understand that returning a more normal life is a very slow-going process, and that the status of The Cottage Garden could change at any time. There is a chance that the county or state could shut down childcare again. There is a chance that one of us could become ill and we would have to close for the day, at a minimum. There's also a chance that your child could show symptoms of illness during the day, and we will call you and ask you to come pick them up. There is a chance that someone in our community becomes exposed to COVID-19, in which case we will need to close our program.

We understand that you are all eager to return to work and a full as possible life, and we want to help with this as much as we can; however, we ask that all parents have a back-up plan for childcare should The Cottage Garden need to close its doors again, or should your child need to be sent home.

Before beginning this next year at The Cottage Garden, we are asking every family to agree to these new policies. If you have any questions or concerns, please talk to Celia before our program resumes.

The New Cottage Garden Rhythm for 2020-21

We have a wonderful and large backyard, with a fence to keep everyone safe, a built-in hill slide, an 8ft. hexagon sandbox and lots of places to climb and run. We want to be able to stay outside for longer periods of time both daily and through the seasons. We want this for everyone's protection and because we know children need and love to be outside. We hope to be adding a wooden gazebo for shade as well as a place to eat and play in inclement weather. There will be lots more to come on this subject very soon!

Initially, weather permitting, we will be outside every morning for longer periods than we have been in the past. This will help lessen the possibility of becoming exposed to Covid-19, as well as lessen the necessity of adhering to all safety issues and protocols around that. It will also lessen the time spent on the transitions of dressing and undressing. Most importantly, it will allow the children to breathe lots of fresh air. In response to this, please always dress your child appropriately. In the summer, fall & spring, please apply sunscreen before they come; a hat is an absolute. If they have a long-sleeved swim shirt, please allow them to wear it as we may turn on the sprinkler if it gets too hot. We advise that you have a few towels in your car as we may also use it at the end of the day. We will have morning and afternoon snack outside.

Before we begin, we will invite each of you, individually, to come and spend some time with your child and us in our backyard. Also, here are several things you can do in your own home to help make it an easier transition for your child. We are suggesting these ideas because they have worked for others and because you will not be able to remain with your child after drop-off.

- Begin now to talk to your child about Celia and Barbara as well as The Cottage Garden.
 - Ask: "I wonder what B & C are doing now? Putting all the toys in their baskets to get ready for you to come back; putting sand in the sandbox; making soup?..."
 - Put a photo of us on the fridge, low down so they can see it and know what we look like.
 - Look at photos from a Cottage Garden photobook, if you have one, or there are tons of photos on the website
 - Practice living in our daily rhythm if possible.
- Arrival - during arrival time, adults MUST wear a mask and they MUST have filled out the digital form of Daily Screening Questions (included later in this letter) and sent it to Celia before drop-off. Celia will email each of you a Google Drive doc template that you must save, fill out, date and sign each day. She must keep it filed away, digitally for our licensor to be able to see it. This year, parents may not come into the back yard or the house as a group. We will be available at 8am outside in the backyard, whenever weather permits, otherwise on the front porch. Please come one at a time to the porch or the side gate entrance to the backyard, where Celia will be waiting for you. When you are ready to hand your child to her, you must do so and

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then leave. If you are ready, it will help your child to be ready. We know this may be difficult, but we will plan our first days with each of you individually, and we will call you if your child can't settle. Celia will bring the children to Barbara, who will be waiting in the yard or the house for them, and then Celia will come to gather the next child. Leaving and being out of sight is also really helpful for your child. It may take a few days, but we will all be ok and soon they will all settle into their Cottage Garden routine. We will call you if your child is unable to settle; REALLY, we promise!!!

- Play - we will be playing and eating snack (around 9:15) outside for as long as the weather allows. We will bring a few additional playthings to use outside, our wooden blocks will be set up in containers around the yard, we have 2 small, wooden climbing structures, a blue foam triangle for climbing and our rocker boards.
- Storytime - we will have our story outside after we eat. Celia brings out her Story basket and sometimes a Story Apron, to tell a tiny nurse rhyme puppet play to the children each day.
- Diapering/Toileting - we will have 3 Diapering stations, all equipped with all of our supplies and the children's extra clothes-just in case. 1 outside, 2 inside. We have a potty that we can have outside too.
- We will come inside around 11:15, wash our hands, change diapers or use the toilet, and then have a bit of play inside while lunch is readied at the table.
- We have 3 highchairs, if needed, and our table. We will continue to have vegetable soup, a grain, milk and cheddar cheese for lunch. Celia always serves the children individually. Celia will probably wear a mask while serving the children.
- Nap - we may try for a little earlier this year...we shall see, 12:30- 2:30ish. Each child will have a porta-crib that is theirs for the year with their own bedding. Celia is making a lovey for each child, a flannel knot doll, with their symbol sewn onto it. They will be machine washable and will be washed each week, more if needed. Mats for the older children will be set up in the playroom.
- Loveys - if your child must bring one from home, it must stay at The Cottage Garden AND be machine washable.
- Waking up - is always a cozy time. It may take a few weeks to get into our rhythm, but they eventually do. They wake and look for their friends with a sleepy face. We get the children changed and toileted, wash hands and then we will probably go back outside to have our snack of fresh fruit and home baked bread and butter.
- Dismissal - is at 12:30 or 4:30.
 - 12:30 dismissal -Please text Celia and she will bring out your child. You must wear a mask for dismissal.
 - 4:30 dismissal - We will come to the front yard and one of us will bring your child to the gate. Please wear your mask and wait your turn.

NEW Policies - Families must conduct daily health checks for their children at home prior to arrival at The Cottage Garden. While it has always been our policy for children to be kept home when ill (see below), **it is now more important than ever before**. Children must be kept home if they are showing any signs of illness. Families must have a daily backup plan should their child need to stay home. If your child has seasonal allergies and is sneezing a lot or has a drippy, clear mucous, nose you must speak to your PCP and provide us with a written note to say it is ok for them to attend our program that day.

From the Handbook 2019-20

Illness Policy – The Cottage Garden program is a long and social time for a young child who is feeling under the weather, which sometimes includes the time after receiving an injection. If your child is unable to go outside to play with us it is better if you keep them at home. Please remember that most children under three and a half are not aware when they need to blow their noses or how to cover their mouths when they sneeze, so they sneeze all over their friends, us or the table! Now, imagine that times 7!!! Yikes! Please, please keep them home for a day or two.

Please keep your child at home if they:

- have not been free of diarrhea or vomiting within the past 24 hours;
- are coughing or sneezing with a runny nose, especially if it is thick and greenish;
- have had a fever within the past 24 hours;
- are on the first two days of allopathic medication.

Are contagious in any way

If parent is sick please text and we will bring your child to you

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- **Arrival & Dismissal** - We ask that one parent/caregiver is chosen to always, unless circumstances would not allow this, to bring and pick up their child. This will cut down on the number of people whom enter the vicinity of our program and our home. We will also be mindful of this regarding those with whom we socialize.
 - Please let us know if someone other than a parent will be dropping off or picking up your child. We will also need their contact information should your child become ill during the day and need to be picked up
 - **Cleaning** - We will be cleaning and sanitizing on a daily basis, all surfaces that the children eat off of, highchairs, doorknobs, bathroom etc. etc.- we have ALWAYS done this, but will be even more mindful now.
 - **Communication** - We will continue to use email, text and a phone call if needed. Please check a few times per day. Celia will be sending out a weekly check-in to all parents.
 - **Food** - We will still be serving our organic, hot food to the children.
 - The Menu is in the Handbook, online.
 - We are part of a food program, and you will need to sign those forms in October. New families will have to sign in September and October, as their year begins then.
 - Children will be seated at least 1 chair/seat away from each other or in a highchair.
 - They will each have their own water cup and we have stainless cups for drinking at meals.
 - We use filtered water.
 - **Forms** - Parents and guardians are required to:
 - Read and sign this Enrollment Agreement Addendum, including following the health and safety protocols outlined in this document.
 - Submit all forms on the website in the Parent Portal; the password is: Lullabye.
 - Update emergency contact information, if applicable.
 - **Gloves** - These are required for diapering, administering first aid and for food preparation.
 - **Hand Sanitizer** - This will be available by each door, gate, and in our pockets. We will ask your permission to use it with your child if needed.
 - **Handwashing** - We have two, new, lovely music boxes, to keep by the sinks, pulling gently on the handle gives us 20-30 seconds of the Brahms Lullabye. We will wash hands upon entering from outside, before and after eating, bathroom, diapering and whenever else it is needed. We have an outside handwashing station also.
 - **Masks** - these are now required (as per the new revised regulations, Aug 24.) for us during the program day, if not able to keep social distance, but, especially while diapering, feeding the children, preparing food and when cuddling.
 - All adults must wear masks at arrival and drop off.
 - Under 2-The children are not required to wear masks, if there are instances that you would like your child to wear a mask, please provide 2, and please speak to Celia.
 - 3 years + -The EEC is now recommending that all children over 3 wear a mask if unable to keep social distance. Please send 2 masks each day or to leave here, we will launder them daily.
 - We will use our best judgement on this.
 - **Outdoor space** - There will be more to come on this, but we hope to build an open structure/gazebo in the backyard.
 - **Physical Distancing** - This will be required between adults. We will not require this for the children, but we also will not encourage the possible necessity for them; for example, we won't play any ring games where we have to hold hands. At story-time, they will be sitting at least a chair apart from each other.
 - **Travel** - Please stay up to date on the Massachusetts TRAVEL BAN. We must ask that you do not travel, even to visit friends, for the 14 days before we begin, or before we return after our vacations. Please keep us informed of any travel plans for your family, business or pleasure.
 - Families may be required to quarantine after international travel or travel within certain states with widespread community transmission of COVID-19, pursuant to current MA Gov. guidance, <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/covid-19-travel-order#lower-risk-states>
 - Families who have a member who travels for work must contact Celia to work out an individualized plan.
 - **Ventilation** - We will open windows and doors whenever possible, when we are outside, and after the children leave for the day. We will have a fan in each room.

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Procedures at School

We will be implementing the following procedures in order to limit the spread of germs as much as possible:

- Working with children to wash hands and/or sanitize at drop-off, after potty use/diapering, before snack and lunch, and before rest time.
- Using gloves when preparing food.
- Wearing face masks at certain times during the day; drop off and dismissal, feeding the children and preparing food.
- Wiping down and sanitizing surfaces, diapering stations, and bathrooms daily.
- Washing and changing aprons for food prep and diapering.
- Laundering blankets used at rest time every week.
- Cleaning toys as needed and removing toys that have been in a child's mouth.

Procedures for COVID Cases

- Should anyone in our Cottage Garden community come into contact with someone who has tested positive for the COVID-19 virus, we will ask that family to self-quarantine for 14 days.
- Should anyone in our Cottage Garden community test positive for COVID-19 (this includes parents, children, grandparents etc., who help with childcare, caregivers, and all staff) they will be asked to self-quarantine for 14 days and our program may need to close. Because of this, we ask that all parents and families continue to follow social distancing and shelter-in-place procedures as best they can while slowly re-entering the workplace and our school.
- Should a case of COVID occur in The Cottage Garden community, all family members will be notified via email, with the subject being: **Health Safety Notice**. Due to confidentiality, we will not name the affected individual/s.
- If a case of COVID is detected in the community, we will follow the guidelines and recommendations of the Massachusetts Department of Health and families must do the same.
- If any member of a Cottage Garden community has been exposed to COVID-19, families must inform Celia. Families must then follow quarantine recommendations from the Department of Public Health. Exposure is defined as close contact (being within six feet of an individual who has tested positive for COVID-19 for more than ten minutes during their infectious period). This period starts 48 hours before symptoms begin and continues until they have recovered
- The program must be closed for a minimum of 10 days from the 1st day of the last positive family member's symptoms appearing AND all family members must be fever-free for 72 hours without fever-reducing medications AND all sick family members must experience significant improvement in symptoms AND have the approval of the family's primary care physician.
- Return to normal program activities may occur when these criteria have been met AND the local board of health's requirements for release from isolation have been met.

Illness During the School Day

- Any child who develops or shows signs or symptoms--listed below in the Daily Screening Questions--at school will be isolated in our bedroom or on the porch with one of us, while we call you to promptly pick your child.

Confirmed illness - If someone who has been in the CG space, whether actively employed in the childcare or not, is *presumed or confirmed* to have COVID-19, then we will take the following steps:

- Notify all families that someone is presumed or confirmed to have COVID-19 and encourage daily monitoring of their own child and themselves for symptoms;
 - Consult with the local board of health for guidance on next steps and the recommended duration of closure, based on level of contact and potential exposure to others in the home. If for any reason we are unable to speak with the health board, we will contact our licensor for more information.
 - Clean and disinfect the childcare play spaces.
- Parents who are out of town during the school day or unavailable for any reason, must designate someone local to pick up their child if necessary.
 - Any individuals who are COVID positive must quarantine according to public health guidelines, assist the Cottage Garden in contact tracing efforts, and participate in public health community tracing efforts.
 - The School will report any case of COVID detected in our community to local public health officials as required.

Return to Care-PLEASE SEE THE ATTACHED CHART

The following provides a general set of guidelines for returning to our program. In addition, you will also need to consult with your Primary Care Physician (PCP) to determine when they think your child may safely return to care.

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General Information:

- Contact for the state's dedicated epidemiologist for childcare: Dr. Katherine Hsu at Katherine.hsu@massmail.state.ma.us or 617-983-6948.
- Amherst Board of Health contact - Jennifer Brown at 413-259-3241
- Commonwealth's Community Tracing Collaborative (<https://www.mass.gov/info-details/learnabout-the-community-tracing-collaborative>) which will inform others who may have been a close contact and exposed (including any families that share the childcare space) while maintaining confidentiality of the infected
- https://eeclead.force.com/resource/1594088576000/Parent_Reopening_Guide
- <https://www.mass.gov/doc/ma-covid-19-testing-sites/download>

In addition to the above, The Cottage Garden requires families to abide by local, state, and federal guidelines related to COVID. For example, at this time all Massachusetts residents are instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days when they return home from traveling internationally or to other states (with some exceptions).

Daily Screening Questions-an online form will be provided for this

In following the mandate of the EEC (Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care), the following screening questions will be asked of families daily, they must be signed/initialed and kept on file:

Daily Screening Questions

- 1) Today, or in the past 24 hours, has your child or any of your household members had any of the following symptoms:
 - Fever, with a temperature of 100.0°F or above;
 - Cough;
 - Sore throat;
 - Difficulty breathing;
 - Gastrointestinal symptoms (diarrhea, nausea, vomiting);
 - Fatigue (*Fatigue alone will not exclude a child from participation unless fatigue is marked enough to warrant concern*);
 - Headache;
 - New loss of smell or taste;
 - New muscle aches;
 - Any other sign of illness (runny nose, etc.)?
- 2) In the past 14 days, have you or any of your household members had close contact with a person known to be infected with the novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

If
your

If the answer is yes to any of these questions, then your child may not attend The Cottage Garden again until the requirements, listed below have been met.

Changes in Policies

It is important to note that as information around COVID-19 is changing constantly, **these policies are subject to change at any time without any prior notification.**

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**YOU MUST SIGN AND RETURN THIS PAPER TO CELIA BEFORE YOUR CHILD
MAY ATTEND THE COTTAGE GARDEN FOR THE SCHOOL YEAR 2020-2021**

Child's Name: _____

Date: _____

- I acknowledge that I have read and agree to The Cottage Garden's General Illness and COVID-19 Illness Policy and will share them with any other individuals caring for my child.
- I acknowledge that we are all working together to prevent illness, and that in the event that I or one of my family members becomes ill, I will not hold The Cottage Garden or any household members responsible for the illness nor for any of its repercussions.

Parent/Legal guardian signature

date

Parent/Legal guardian signature

date