

Aldo Leopold Nature Preschool (ALNP) COVID-19 Response Plan

We have been working hard over the last few months to ensure that our program is meeting the best possible health and safety practices in response to COVID-19. Our Response Plan includes updated licensing regulations set by the Wisconsin Department of Children and Families, as well as current guidelines and recommendations established by Public Health Madison and Dane County and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction. Due to the changing nature of this virus and its impact on our local community, these policies are subject to change.

This document is meant to be a supplement to ALNP's [Parent Handbook](#) and highlights changes to our program related to COVID-19. Please thoroughly read the [Parent Handbook](#) for additional information and questions.

Goals for the 2020-2021 School Year:

- Keep all students and staff physically safe.
- Care for the social-emotional needs of students and staff.
- Design flexibility into the school schedule should we need to adjust our program in response to COVID-19.
- Modify our spaces and protocols as needed, without losing the core values of our program.
- Create an experience for children to grow physically, socially and intellectually using nature & the outdoors as a framework during this challenging time.

What Is ALNP's Policy on Face Masks and Physical Distancing?

Facemasks are currently required for all adults and children over the age of 2. This includes educators, staff, volunteers, parents, caregivers, and children over the age of 2 when indoors and outdoors.

- Parents and caregivers are required to wear a mask at drop-off, pick-up, and in outdoor meeting areas.
- Preschool-aged children are required to wear a mask while participating in our program outdoors or indoors.
- In supporting the social-emotional development of young children, physical distancing is challenging to maintain, and the physical distance between children may change often, and suddenly. Children and staff will physically distance as much as possible throughout the day, but our educators also know that children need hugs, free play time with friends, and an occasional hand to hold. We will still be able to offer these to children as safely as possible by having both staff and children wear face masks throughout the day and encouraging frequent handwashing.
- The wearing of masks is a new skill for many preschool-aged children. Educators will support children by helping develop this skill and by allowing for mask breaks as needed. During a mask break, a child will be physically separated from the group by a short distance and be allowed to remove their masks. They will be provided with books or a quiet activity until they are ready to return to the group.
- Families should provide their own masks for their preschooler. However, child-sized disposable surgical ear loop masks are available if needed.
- ALNP utilizes the Center for Healthy Mind's Kindness Curriculum and will incorporate why we wear masks into this important intention, highlighting "we not me" when discussing masks.

Nature Will Be Our Primary Classroom

We will be following an all-outdoor, Forest Kindergarten model until further notice.

- As a nature preschool, we believe children should be outdoors as much as possible. This has never been more important as it is during the pandemic, and we are grateful to have the resources and outdoor space to accommodate this model. However, we also know children must be safe and comfortable, so we will move indoors when necessary due to extreme temperatures or other hazardous weather.
- This means that we will be spending almost all of our time outside when school starts and well into the fall semester.
- Our indoor classrooms will be reserved for bathroom visits and as a place to shelter from inclement weather (severe storms, extreme heat or cold).
- If staff determine it is too cold to sustain an all-outside model, we will divide our time between outdoors and indoors in accordance with the temperature, with a continuing emphasis on outdoor learning and as much time as possible spent outside.
- If we have to be indoors due to weather, doors to the outside and windows will be opened (each room has one door that opens to outside and multiple windows) whenever possible to increase air flow.
- Your child's preschool small group will have its own designated outdoor (& indoor) classroom space.
- Until regulations are lifted, there will be no co-mingling between classes.

Managing Bathroom Visits

Parents and caregivers are asked to take their child to the bathroom just prior to leaving home.

- Staff will escort children inside to the bathroom as needed. We do have to maintain teacher-child ratios, which means our outdoor experiences may be compromised if the entire class needs to come inside for bathroom visits.
- Skipping a trip to the bathroom may result in a toileting accident, which compromises your child's confidence, makes them cold and uncomfortable, and creates a health risk.
- There are no bathrooms available on the trails. In an emergency (and depending on location and urgency), staff may assist your child in a "nature pee".

Hand Washing Is Essential

We have always encouraged hand-washing in our program, as it is one of the simplest and most effective ways to keep everyone healthy.

- In response to COVID-19, we have installed special handwashing stations in our outdoor gathering spaces
- Upon arrival, children will be directed to wash their hands at an outdoor handwashing station.
- We provide environmentally-friendly liquid soap.
- We also carry hand sanitizer on our hikes. Staff will ensure this is inaccessible to children
- We will have children wash their hands at drop-off and pick-up, before and after eating, after sneezing and blowing noses, and after using the bathroom. Additional handwashing may occur after activities or at other times as needed.
- Once the weather turns colder, children will wash their hands indoors.
- In cold weather, children will begin wearing mittens and staff may rely more heavily on hand sanitizer while outside.

What Size Will Groups Be?

- Public Health Madison and Dane County (PHMDC) is currently limiting child care group sizes to 15. Because most of our classes will be enrolled at 16 children with 2 teachers, we will divide each class into two separate small groups. Each small group of 8 will have separate indoor and outdoor meeting spots/classrooms. We will maintain this arrangement until it is safe to gather together as a full class. If you have requests that your child be paired in a small group with a friend, please let us know as soon as possible.
- Please be aware that with the small size of our program, educators may be in contact with more than one group of children. If you have specific concerns about this or want to know staff schedules, please let us know. Staff schedules are consistent, but may change on occasion as subs may be called upon due to illness, vacation, workshops/trainings, etc.

How Will Drop-off and Pick-up Work?

- **Starting times are staggered in order to allow for a smooth drop-off process.**
 - **Before Care** children are welcome to join us anytime between 7:30am-8:00am.
 - **Cottontail** children in our 8:00am class are welcome to join us anytime between 8:00am-8:20am.
 - **Chickadee** children in our 8:30am classes are welcome to join us anytime between 8:30am-8:50am.
 - **Chickadee** children in our 12:30pm class are welcome to join us anytime between 12:30-12:50pm.
- Families may arrive at ALNP early if you wish, but our educators will not be available to check your child in until the start of class time.
- We will make a point of remaining in our outdoor meeting spaces for longer periods before we go hiking, in order to accommodate the expanded arrival window.
- We are not adjusting our pick-up window at the end of class, as we need this time to clean our spaces and materials, making sure they are ready for the next group of children.
- We have traditionally posted a “Daily Almanac” from the educators, highlighting the days’ activities. We are forgoing the posting of this for now, as it requires adults crowding together in small spaces, and instead will provide regular emailed updates describing our activities.
- Parents and caregivers will drop-off and pick-up their child at their designated outdoor meeting spaces and must remain with their child until educators have checked them in. Educators will take temperatures of children upon arrival and may need to ask adults a few health-screening questions at the start of each week.

When should I keep my child home?

Parents are expected to assess the health of their child on a daily basis before coming to Preschool. You should keep your child at home if:

- Your child has a fever. Fever reducing medication may not be used when determining a child’s health. Under current guidelines, children must be fever-free for 24 hours (1 day) before returning to preschool.
- Your child is experiencing [recognizable symptoms of COVID-19](#).
- Your child has been exposed to someone who has had COVID-19 (by testing or medical diagnosis) within the past 14 days.
- Your child has had close contact (close contact is defined as “within 6 feet for 15 minutes or more over a 24 hour period”) with a person who was showing symptoms (or who was asymptomatic but tested positive) of COVID-19 within the previous 14 days.
- Anyone in your household is under a 14-day quarantine for COVID-19.

- We also request that you keep your child at home if they are experiencing a persistent runny nose, skin rash, stomach ailment, or any symptoms of a contagious illness. COVID-19 appears to affect children differently than adults. Our goal is to avoid spreading illness of any kind to the children and adults in our program, which means keeping sick children, and adults, at home.

What happens if a child develops symptoms of COVID-19 while at ALNP?

If a child develops symptoms of COVID-19, we will follow the protocols below, and contact you to come pick-up your child. We ask that families remain in touch to rule out COVID-19 diagnosis or, in the event of a positive test, so that timely and proper notifications can be made.

Our COVID-19 protocols include the following:

- Remove the child from their group and relocate them to an isolated area with a member of staff. Both adult and child will wear facemasks & PPE.
- Call the parent/guardian to pick the child up.
- Report the event to the Preschool Director.
- Report the event to the Executive Director, Public Health Madison & Dane County (PHMDC), and Department of Children & Families (DCF) in the event of a positive test or diagnosis.
- If a child tests positive for COVID-19, we will follow the guidance of the PHMDC. It is likely the entire class, including educators, will need to remain home for 14 days before returning to ALNP.
- If anyone in our program tests positive for COVID-19, we will notify all the families. We will share information regarding the individual's classroom, as well as the time and days they are in our program, but will not identify the individual by name.
- It is very likely that ALNP will shut down at some point/s during the year due to possible exposure. We want families to be prepared for this and recognize that it may be shared on short notice due to the nature of the situation. We want to acknowledge that a shut-down (full or partial) doesn't mean anyone did anything wrong. In fact, it means we are doing things right to prevent community spread. We recognize the inconvenience this places on families and ask that all families & staff work to be safe and responsible both in and outside of the ALNP community.

What happens if my child (or someone close to my child) has had exposure or tests positive?

Please contact ALNP staff as soon as possible so we can work with you to make the best decision. ALNP will follow [PHMDC guidelines for childcare centers](#) as a baseline for decision making, but may err on the side of caution and make a decision that is more conservative than the requirements of PHMDC.

See procedures above for the same reporting and notification information.

If ALNP closes for COVID-19, will I receive a refund for days missed?

If ALNP cancels a program due to COVID-19:

- Refunds will not be given if the cancellation is less than a full calendar week (M-F). If ALNP cancels for more than a week due to COVID-19, your tuition will be prorated by the week and credit will be given for weeks missed.
- In this scenario, you may choose to request a refund, a credit towards next month's tuition (or future program fees), or donate your tuition.

For other non-COVID-19 refund questions, please refer to the [ALNP Parent Handbook](#).

How will we manage snacks and lunch this year?

- Snacks & lunch will happen outdoors (unless inclement weather) in each child's small group.

- Indoor & Outdoor drinking fountains will be turned off for sanitation, so children should bring a labelled water bottle to keep with them and refill as needed. Cups will also be available and washed and sanitized after each use.
- For the Cottontail (M-F full day) classroom, and as per usual, lunch needs to be sent from home. While your child should be the only one touching their own lunch containers, families should ensure proper sanitation of containers and bags that are going back and forth from home.
- The T-F optional lunch hour (11:30-12:30) is suspended until further notice.
- Food preparation safety procedures will be followed, similar to non-COVID times.
- Family style serving will be avoided, if possible. Adults will prepare each child's portion using serving utensils and/or gloves.
- Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) guidelines will be followed for preparing and serving meals and snacks. ALNP will provide milk as a beverage option for children at lunch only. Water will be offered with all snacks.
- ALNP will provide a special snack (birthday trail mix) to celebrate your child's birthday. Please do not send any special snacks or treats from home.

How often are the facilities and materials cleaned?

While ALNP's program will primarily be run outside, we still recognize the need for cleaning and sanitizing procedures, both indoors and out. ALNP will minimize the potential for the spread of germs in the program space by temporarily removing items that are not easily cleanable (such as rugs, pillows, furs, etc).

Each indoor classroom is outfitted with disinfecting wipes and cleaning/sanitizing spray. Staff will also carry disinfecting wipes and alcohol based hand sanitizer with them for use on outdoor items and while on the trail.

Restrooms will be cleaned each morning with a virucidal disinfectant. Disinfecting will occur as needed throughout the day by teaching staff and operational support staff.

- Teaching materials (e.g. pond nets or binoculars) will be individually assigned and/or disinfected between use.
- Children will be asked to bring some items for individual use to eliminate sharing, such as a baggie of markers or crayons.
- Outdoor items (shovels, binoculars, etc) will be sprayed with an alcohol-based sanitizer in between uses.
- Classrooms and high-touch areas (door knobs / push bars, light switches) will be disinfected each evening using bleach, hydroxide and/or alcohol-based cleaners.
- ALNC will follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation with any chemicals and will, as an organizational policy, use the most environmentally-friendly option that still meets disinfectant/sanitation needs.
- Extensive use of disinfectant products should be done when children are not present, and the facility thoroughly aired out before children return. This will take place in the evenings and/or early morning.
- If you would like a list of specific cleaning products used, please contact ALNP staff.

How can parents and caregivers support our program?

- Have your child use the bathroom before leaving home!
- Label everything! This includes water bottles, mittens, boots, and facemasks! So many children come to preschool with identical-looking items, and we do not want to mix these items up or risk children mistaking items at this time.



- Send a filled water bottle every day. Staying hydrated is important and we will not be using the drinking fountains until further notice. Wash the water bottle each evening. Water bottles can be refilled at preschool when necessary.
- Dress your child for the weather. ALNC will continue to provide Oaki suits for all children to use while they are in attendance. Suits will not be shared this year and each child will “check-out” a suit for the year. If you need to change sizes at any point in the year, please let your child’s teacher know.
- Send your child with several layers (labeled with their name). Doors and windows will be open even when we are indoors, so we need children to be comfortable in a range of temperatures throughout the day.
- Keep your child home when sick.
- Please read ALNP emails to stay informed about calendar changes or changes to our COVID-19 Response Plan.
- Call our main line at 608-221-0404 x0 to report your child’s absence. If you need to get a message to ALNP staff urgently during the day, please also use this number, and administrative staff will take your call.
- More general business may be conducted by email, but please understand that we aren’t always able to receive or respond to email during school hours.
- Let us know if you or your child needs additional support for any reason.

We understand that your children are attending preschool this year under unusual circumstances. We are here to support their learning, while doing our best to ensure a safe, happy and healthy environment for all!