



Policy #3: Infectious Disease Control

Policy Overview

Exposure to a variety of infectious diseases in a school population are not unexpected and are often commonplace. This policy provides information to Mill Neck personnel regarding appropriate actions that can be taken to identify infectious diseases, to assure appropriate health care for students and staff, and to control the spread of disease.

The Mill Neck Family of Organizations takes proactive steps to protect the workplace in the event of an infectious disease outbreak. The Mill Neck Family of Organizations will ensure a clean workplace, including the regular cleaning of objects and areas that are frequently used. It is our goal to strive to operate effectively and ensure that all essential services are continuously provided and that employees are safe within the workplace.

We are committed to providing authoritative information about the nature and spread of infectious diseases, including symptoms and signs to watch for, as well as required steps to be taken in the event of an illness or outbreak.

General Procedures

There are numerous infectious diseases that are common in schools and service-oriented facilities. Examples of such diseases and their major symptoms include:

- Common cold: Sneezing, runny nose, congestion, cough, watery eyes.
- Influenza or “flu”: Fever, chills, body aches, sore throat, loss of appetite, tiredness.
- Strep throat: Fever, stomach pain, red and swollen tonsils, throat pain.
- Gastroenteritis or “stomach flu”: Diarrhea, nausea, vomiting.
- Mononucleosis or “mono”: Fever, muscle aches, tiredness, and sore throat.
- Ear infection: Ear pain, fever, trouble swallowing or sleeping, tugging at ear in younger children.
- Conjunctivitis or “pinkeye”: Eye redness, swelling, discharge, eye discomfort, itching.
- Coronavirus or COVID-19: 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, and/or diarrhea.

All employees must cooperate in taking steps to reduce the transmission of infectious disease in the workplace. The best strategies include frequent hand washing with warm, soapy water; wearing face masks and maintaining social distance; covering your mouth whenever you sneeze or cough; and discarding used tissues in wastebaskets.

In any school population, there are certain individuals who may have a higher risk of complications if exposed to specific diseases. For example, students and staff with anemia or immunodeficiencies, and those who are pregnant are all considered “high risk.” In addition, those who have chronic



disease, nutritional deficiencies, or debilitating illness should also be informed of the possible risks of acquiring an infection. The responsibility of the school and organization is not to determine the extent of that risk, but to inform these individuals whenever there is increased risk of exposure to an infectious disease and to encourage them to consult with their licensed health care provider. The licensed health care provider will assess the risk and make appropriate recommendations for treatment of his/her patient.

Handwashing Procedures

Hand washing is the first line of defense against the spread of infection. Strict hand washing must be practiced by the children and staff including, but not limited to the following items:

1. Upon arrival at the program.
2. Before eating or handling food.
3. After going to the bathroom or assisting in the toileting or diapering.
4. After contact with body fluid (blood, mucus, feces, vomitus, etc.).
5. After cleaning areas contaminated with body fluids.
6. After handling pets or equipment.

Hands should be washed with warm running water and liquid soap, using friction for 15-30 seconds. Hands should be dried with disposable towels or a labeled personal towel, which cannot be used for anyone else. The faucet should be turned off with a disposable towel so that clean hands are not dirtied.

NOTE: Hand sanitizers are not as effective as washing with soap and water and should not be used as a replacement for standard hand washing with soap and water. When hand washing facilities are not available, an ethanol alcohol-based (minimum 62 percent) hand sanitizer can be used, preferably in fragrance-free gel or foaming form. Hands must be washed with soap and running water as soon as feasible. Hand sanitizers are never appropriate when there is significant contamination such as occurs during a visit to a petting zoo or farm, after handling an animal, after changing a diaper, after playing outside, before preparing food or eating, after touching an infected wound, or after using the bathroom. Caution is recommended to avoid accidental ingestion or abuse of hand sanitizers by students.

In Person Attendance Procedures

Unless otherwise notified, normal attendance and leave policies remain in place. Individuals who believe they have special challenges in reporting to work during an infectious disease outbreak should take steps to develop any necessary contingency plans by working directly with his/her supervisor or director. For example, employees might want to speak with supervisors about the potential to work from home temporarily or on an alternative work schedule. Telework requests



will be handled on a case-by-case basis. While not all positions will be eligible, all requests for temporary telecommuting should be submitted to your supervisor or director for consideration.

Self-Screening Procedures

Employees must take reasonable precautions to avoid transmitting infectious diseases. During any infectious disease outbreak, employees should screen themselves for possible exposure. Before committing to coming to work, each employee should know the answers to the following questions:

1. Have you been exposed to anyone who has tested positive for COVID-10 or an infectious disease by your primary care physician or medical doctor??
2. Were you in another state other than MA, CT, NJ or PA, for more than 24 hours?
3. Were you in another state other than MA,CT, NJ or PA, for less than 24 hours?
4. Have you tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days?
5. Do you have symptoms, such as elevated temperature or fever, nausea, vomiting, chills, diarrhea, cough, sore throat, etc.?

Many times, with the best of intentions, employees report to work even though they feel ill or have symptoms of illness. During an infectious disease outbreak, it is critical that employees do not report to work while they are ill and/or are experiencing symptoms. We provide paid sick time and other benefits to compensate employees who are unable to work due to illness. Employees who report to work ill will be sent home.

Confidentiality of Medical Information Procedures

If you are out sick or show symptoms of being ill, it may become necessary to request information from you and/or your health care provider. In general, we would request medical information to confirm your need to be absent, to show whether and how an absence relates to the infection, and to know that it is appropriate for you to return to work. As always, we expect and appreciate your cooperation if and when medical information is sought.

Our policy is to treat any medical information as a confidential medical record. In furtherance of this policy, any disclosure of medical information is in limited circumstances with supervisors, managers, first aid and safety personnel, and government officials as required by law.

Social Distancing Procedures

In the event of an infectious disease outbreak, Mill Neck Family of Organizations may implement these social distancing guidelines to minimize the spread of the disease among the staff. During the workday, employees are requested to:



1. Mill Neck will use “no personal contact” rule. Any physical contact that is not necessary for the job is to be avoided. Wherever possible, meetings should be held remotely. Employees are encouraged to use the telephone, online conferencing, e-mail or instant messaging to conduct business as much as possible, even when participants are in the same building.
2. If a face-to-face meeting is unavoidable, minimize the meeting time, choose a large meeting room and sit at least one yard from each other if possible; avoid person-to-person contact such as shaking hands. As a general rule, Mill Neck will post the number of people any meeting room can accommodate. For example, before COVID-19, a meeting room could hold 10 people; with the need for social distancing this same room can now only hold 3 to 4 people. Face masks and other protective equipment should be utilized. Whenever you are in public area such as hallway, parking area, bathroom or other areas, face masks must be worn.
3. Mill Neck requires that employees do not “share” everyday work tools. Pens, staplers, notebooks, dry erase markers, desk space, file folders, computers and anything else assigned to one worker should not be shared. Each office will be provided with cleaning supplies. Mill Neck will keep windows and doors open to enhance airflow.
4. Office doors should remain closed to degree possible—anyone needing to enter must knock, wait 5 seconds to allow occupant to put on their face mask, and then enter. If your office has windows, try to keep them open to permit fresh air to circulate. If someone joins you in your office, please place sign on door, to mark full occupancy. When your visitor leaves, the sign should be removed.
5. Do not congregate in workrooms, lunchrooms, copier rooms or other areas where people socialize. Mill Neck will be closing our lunchrooms until further notice throughout this pandemic. We are asking that each staff member uses his/her own stylus for the copier.
6. Bring lunch and eat at your desk or away from others (avoid lunchrooms and crowded restaurants).
7. Encourage members and others to request information and orders via phone and e-mail in order to minimize person-to-person contact. Have the orders, materials and information ready for fast pick-up or delivery.
8. Avoid any unnecessary travel and cancel or postpone nonessential meetings, gatherings, workshops and training sessions.
9. Avoid public transportation (walk, cycle, drive a car) or go early or late to avoid rush hour crowding on public transportation.
10. Avoid recreational or other leisure classes, meetings, activities, etc., where employees might come into contact with contagious people.

Isolation Distancing Procedures



When a person is exposed to an infectious disease, prompt identification and isolation of potentially infectious individuals is a critical first step in protecting employees, children, clients and others.

Wherever possible, immediately isolate individuals suspected of having been exposed to a potentially infectious disease. Each building with students or clients have established an isolation room:

1. Building Four / DayHab: Coat room.
2. Deaf Education Center: Family's waiting room
3. Building 7: Staff interpreter office

Access to the isolation room should be limited to the highest degree possible. People in close contact with the sick person must use additional safety measures to guard against further spread of the potential infection. Program administrators must contact Human Resources if a staff person presents symptoms. The potentially infected employee must notify the following people.

- For Mill Neck Manor School for the Deaf: Notify school administrators and Gwen Watson (school nurse).
- For Mill Neck Services: Notify Director, Program Supervisor and if you worked in Day Hab, the program nurse must be notified.

People who have been exposed to infectious disease or are exhibiting symptoms of illness should, to the degree possible, use face mask and other protective equipment to further minimize spread.

The isolation room's door should be closed. While on campus, isolated individual will be monitored by one staff member. Isolated individuals should leave the campus as soon as possible. Depending upon the severity of the isolated person's illness, he or she might be able to return home or seek medical care on his or her own, but some individuals may need emergency medical services that Mill Neck personnel must arrange.

Always remember, if you are feeling unwell or believe you have been exposed to an infectious disease, **STAY AT HOME**. Let your immediate supervisor and Human Resources know. You may be eligible for a variety of paid time off. Each situation is different, so talk to your manager or Human Resources.

Related Policies

All staff should be familiar with related policies to ensure a clean and hygienic work environment, including but not limited to:

- Policy #1: COVID-19
- Policy #2: Universal Precautions
- Policy #4: Cleaning