



**From the Desk of:
Patricia Salvarezza
Program Director**

8/13/2020

Dear Parents,

LEAP Head Start / Early Head Start has studied the guidance from multiple state and federal sources: the Center for Disease Control, NYS Department of Health, NYS Office of Children and Family Services and the Office of Head Start. Based on the recommendations we received, we have developed a series of safety protocols and practices that will guide the safe reopening of our centers.

Comprehensive safety protocols have been developed for every center to maximize in person learning for children. On July 20, we welcomed Early Head Start children back to the center. Opening slowly allowed staff time to prepare and practice safety protocols and practices. We are now preparing for the reopening of Head Start services.

Components of Reopening for All Children and Staff

- We will provide social distancing to the greatest extent possible.
- Children who receive transportation services will be asked to wear a mask while on the bus.
- Seats on the bus will be extremely limited to allow for social distancing.
- Basic health screenings for all staff and enrolled children will be conducted daily.
 - Staff are required to take their temperature before coming to school each day and submit a certification form to verify their health status.
 - Parents will participate in a daily entry health screening upon arrival at school or prior to child boarding the bus. The child's temperature will be taken using a touch free thermometer.
- Staff will be required to wear face masks at all times while in the presence of children. Children will not be required to wear a mask in the classroom. If families would like their child to wear a mask we will do our best to comply. Given the age of the children in our program, it may be difficult for them to wear a mask at all times.
- We will work in coordination with the local health department regarding contact tracing. For anyone who tests positive for COVID19, the program will follow strict safety procedures to minimize the risk for all children and staff.
- Visitors will be highly restricted in all centers; when they are required, they will complete a health screening including a temperature check and provide contact information. No parent volunteers will be permitted at this time.
- All children will remain in their classroom group with the same teachers to minimize exposure.
- Daily cleaning and disinfecting protocols are in effect for all centers (specific cleaning guidelines and safety plans are posted in each center.)
- Shared materials will be minimized and when used, will be disinfected.
- No backpacks or toys from home will be allowed. A full change of clothes will be requested and will remain at the center.
- All nap bedding will be provided and will be laundered daily. Nap mats will be sanitized daily before and after rest time.
- Hallways and stairways will be marked for one-way travel wherever possible, and when not possible, there will be clear signs indicating the flow of traffic.

- All staff will be trained on the new safety protocols and proper hygiene practices prior to school opening. All children will be instructed on safety protocols, social distancing and hygiene practices.

Transportation of Children

- Children and staff will be required to wear masks at all times on school buses.
- Parents/guardians must screen their children prior to getting on the bus or brought to school. Children with a temperature over 100 or who are feeling ill must be kept home. Children will be screened prior to boarding the bus or entering the school.
- Children will sit in the same assigned seat on the bus every day.
- Parents transporting their child to school will be asked to follow the arrival procedure for completing the daily health screening that is established at their child's center. All children who pass the screening will be escorted inside by a teacher.
- Parents transporting their child to school and/or escorting to bus will be asked to wear a mask.

Enrolling Children for In Person or Remote Services

- Each Center-based classroom will have a reduced number of children based on the size of the classroom. The maximum group size will be 10 children; some classrooms will have less than that based on the dimensions of the classroom. We are doing our best to maintain social distance for children and staff.
- Children and families who do not receive a center-based slot will receive services remotely. Parents have the option to request remote services, if they prefer.
- Attendance will be taken each day for all children (in person or remote option).
- Classrooms will be organized to ensure there is the physical distance necessary; nap mats will be arranged at least 6 feet apart. Sanitation and hygiene will be an ongoing part of the daily routine.
- Meals will be plated and served to children in their classroom. We will not provide family-style serving to children during this time. The staff who are responsible for serving food to children will not be assisting children with toileting needs. Staff will follow all hygiene protocols.
- Children will not be brushing their teeth at school. Dental hygiene is important. Lessons on the importance of caring for your teeth will be provided. Each month children will receive a new toothbrush and toothpaste.
- Playgrounds will be used as often as possible and groups of children will not be mixed during outdoor time. Field trips are not permitted at this time.
- In-person therapy sessions can be arranged for children receiving services through Early Intervention or the Committee on Preschool Special Education.
- Parents receiving Home-based services will receive services remotely or in person provided social distance can be maintained. Home visitors will develop individual home-based service plans with each family.
- Home visitors will provide a Daily Health Check for themselves and family at each in person home visit.
- All children and families receiving remote services will be provided a full array of supports and education: Meal delivery, hygiene supplies, educational materials for child to participate in remote lessons, health and developmental screenings, child assessment, parenting resources and virtual parent groups, policy council, case management, mental health services, parent conferences and access to community resources.

If you have any questions or concerns at any time, please reach out to your child's Home Visitor, Family Advocate or Teacher. These are unprecedented times and we are all doing our best to provide as many Head Start services as we are safely able. We will need your assistance and cooperation as we reopen. We look forward to the start of a new school year. We wish you and your family good health.

Warmest regards,
Patricia Salvarezza
Head Start / Early Head Start Program Director