

Addendum to Parent Handbook

COVID Precautions & Policies

Overview

Gan Shalom is pleased to offer a safe, educational environment for families beginning September 2021, in accordance with all safety and wellness procedures recommended by OSSE. As a community, the health, safety and wellbeing of the children and families will remain our top priority and at the forefront of our programming. We recognize that Gan Shalom is a significant part of children's foundational development and the need to maintain social relationships. We will remain open as long as we see fit and are operating with the mindset of *Pikuach Nefesh*, safety first. Gan Shalom will restructure our daily programming to an outdoor based model to optimize individual and group exploration while minimizing health risk. We look forward to providing children a developmentally appropriate learning opportunity with their peers and to promote skill-building in areas that require socialization, including problem solving, amidst this current pandemic.

We recognize that this situation is fluid. The Gan Shalom Parent Advisory Committee will continue to monitor information about the COVID pandemic and track data from our local region. As data demonstrate the public health situation is changing, policies will respond, and accordingly will be updated and shared with all families.

Educator Vaccination Policy

Proof of a COVID Vaccine is mandatory for all Gan Shalom educators. A person shall be considered fully vaccinated 2-weeks after a 2-dose series or 2-weeks after a single dose vaccine. Individual medical information will remain private and communications about medical history will be protected. Exemptions for religious or medical reasons will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The GPAC / COVID Addendum committee, along with the Director will respond to exception requests. All teachers will wear masks at all times, indoors and outdoors, regardless of vaccination status, per OSSE guidelines.

Parent Classroom Volunteers

Parent classroom volunteers have been a cornerstone of Gan Shalom since the founding of the school. Conditional on OSSE policies, we are happy to reinstitute the culture of community involvement and welcome the return of parent classroom volunteers. For a parent to volunteer in the classroom, following practices will be adhered:

- Submit proof of vaccination
- Wear a mask at all times, indoors and outdoors. OSSE requires all adults in a

classroom to wear a mask, regardless of vaccination status.

- Will consciously not engage in behavior or activities that pose a higher risk to COVID transmission leading up to their classroom volunteer days. (Please see the [reference for COVID-19 Risky Behaviors.](#))

Guests (Special Programming)

Gan Shalom has typically engaged with some select extracurricular programs (such as gymnastics, soccer, music, science). As of August 2021, no outside instructors are planned. Should the parent community request this re-engagement, any outside teacher or adult will follow the same practices that parent classroom volunteers are asked to, including providing proof of vaccination.

Student Mask Policies

Children over the age of two will be highly encouraged to wear masks except while eating or doing intense physical activity outside. A child is not required to wear a mask if recommended by a healthcare official for pre-existing reasons, or if a child is excessively touching or playing with their face covering. If children are not able to safely remove or store their face masks, use will be discontinued. Teachers will commit to working with all children to help them wear a mask safely while at Gan. Parents will commit to working with children at home to practice putting on, taking off, and wearing their masks safely. Parent volunteers will work with teachers to provide a positive model for mask wearing.

Given the elevated risk of disease transmission when eating or singing, to the extent possible, these activities will be conducted outdoors to minimize risk.

Student Vaccination Policy

At this time (August 2021), there is no vaccine that has been approved for the age group of Gan Shalom children (ages 2-5 years old). Should a vaccination become available for this age group, this policy will be reviewed by the GPAC and Gan Shalom families. Gan Shalom community recognizes the safety of our children is the foremost priority. A reasonable vaccination policy can contribute to the safety of our children's health. As more people are safely vaccinated, that offers us more flexibility in policies and programming.

Sending a Child to School

A Gan Shalom employee will conduct a daily health screening of each child, following OSSE's "Ask, Ask, Look," format. Each family will answer the following during drop off utilizing the Brightwheel check-in system:

- ***Has your child exhibited any of the symptoms (listed below)?***
 - fever (greater than 100.4) or chills
 - cough
 - congestion

- sore throat
- shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- diarrhea, nausea or vomiting
- fatigue
- headache
- muscle or body aches
- poor feeding or poor appetite
- new loss of taste or smell
- any other symptom of not being well

- *Has your child been in close contact (unmasked, >15 minutes indoors without social distancing) with any person who has a confirmed case of COVID-19?*

Staff will then visually examine/evaluate the child for any signs of illness, including flushed cheeks, rapid breathing or difficulty breathing (not due to exercise), fatigue or fussiness. Children will not be permitted to attend if families answer YES to either question, or if the additional symptoms have been observed. Families will also be required to take their child's temperature every morning, within two hours before arriving at school. Parents must confirm in the Brightwheel App their child does not have a temperature over 100.4.

If a child or staff member reports or develops any of the [above] symptoms, they must not return to preschool until they:

- complete the appropriate isolation period of 24 hours of being fever free without medication, and/or respiratory symptoms have improved (the means, the child does not have a cough and does not have difficulty breathing) **AND** they receive a negative COVID-19 test;
- OR, have been cleared from isolation by a healthcare provider.

Gan Shalom understands that children will experience "cold" symptoms and many of these symptoms overlap with COVID-19 symptoms. As such, receiving a negative COVID-19 test will allow a child to return to the class as early as the test is received. [A list of nearby or accessible COVID-19 testing centers and at-home tests approved for the 2-4 age group is listed here for parent convenience.](#) In symptomatic people, a negative test has been shown to effectively rule out a COVID-19 infection. This policy is partnered with the other precautions our community is taking to keep each other safe, such as vaccinations, abstaining from higher risk behaviors as able, and abstaining from attending school if engaging in [high risk behaviors](#) is unavoidable.

If a child or staff member develops symptoms during school hours, OSSE Licensing Guidelines for Exclusion and Dismissal will be implemented immediately. The child/staff will be removed from the group setting and safely isolated (with supervision) and parents will be notified to pick up as soon as possible. The staff will then proceed with appropriate cleaning and disinfecting protocols. The child may return to school once

they are examined by a doctor and approved to return to the class or once they receive a COVID-19 test with a negative result (as stated above).

Temperature checks will only be administered at school, using a non-contact thermometer or forehead scan, by a staff while using proper PPE, if a child is suspected to be ill. Oral temperature checks are prohibited in a school setting.

Children with pre-existing conditions (i.e. severe allergies/asthma) who present with specific COVID-19 like symptoms will not be excluded, but need to be evaluated by a healthcare provider prior to entry or receive a negative COVID-19 test.

Positive COVID-19 Case Identification

If a child, parent/caregiver, or staff member becomes infected with a positive case of COVID-19, Gan Shalom will follow all guidance laid out by OSSE, after making a report and receiving a consultation made on a case-by-case basis. This may include temporary closure of one or both classes to allow for proper disinfecting and to ensure all who have been in contact with the infected person are able to be tested following testing protocols for when one has been exposed to an infected person (waiting 3-5 days before being tested and reporting PCR test results). In the event of a positive case within our school, we will follow guidance from CDC.

Testing Policies

Testing allows Gan Shalom to provide a safe environment for children and teachers, and maximizes children's attendance. Testing options match many of the child care settings. Children and staff will not be admitted while awaiting a COVID-19 test result.

- Child is presenting with *some* symptoms described above, that could also be due to a common cold and the child has had no known COVID-19 exposure: **Rapid Antigen Test is OK**. Child may return to school once negative results are received. There are several at-home options available that would meet this requirement.
- Child has come in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID
 - If both persons were masked or only met outdoors AND the child is asymptomatic: **PCR test within 3-5 days of exposure is required**. Optional to also get the child a Rapid Antigen Test to provide a quicker turnaround time to inform the Parent President and Gan Shalom Director about the likely status of the child's health. In order to return to school, a PCR test must be provided.
 - If one of the persons were unmasked and if the contact was indoors: then the child must quarantine for 10 days OR the child can quarantine for 7 days if tested for COVID-19 on day 5 or later of the quarantine period and receives a negative test result. **PCR test 5+ days of exposure is required**.

- Child has returned from travel outside of DC, Virginia, and Maryland: **PCR test is required**. The test must occur within 3-5 days of returning to DC (no sooner than 3 days). Please see Travel Policy for full details.
- Random testing: Teachers, parents, and caregivers will be asked to randomly test on a monthly schedule to monitor for asymptomatic cases. For parents and caregivers who are actively involved in our children's care at home this will be voluntary - PCR test results will be reported to the Parent President and Gan Shalom Director.
- Teachers may be asked to test on a regular basis, and provide test results to the Parent President and Gan Shalom Director

Travel Policy

Families who have traveled, by any method of transportation (car, plane, train, etc.) to any place other than Maryland or Virginia must follow these guidelines:

Domestic Travel

- a) Children may not attend school, and volunteers may not be in the classroom for ten days after returning

OR

- b) Produce a negative COVID-19 PCR test administered 3-5 days after returning.

Example: If you return from traveling on a Monday, your child can get a PCR between the days of Thursday - Saturday. If they receive a negative result, they can return to school the following Monday.

International Travel

- a) May not attend school for ten days after returning

OR

- b) May not attend school for seven days after returning, get tested 3-5 days after returning **AND** receive a negative COVID-19 **PCR** test. Even if the test is negative, the child must not attend school for a minimum of seven days.

As with the other policies in this addendum, these travel policies are subject to change as guidance from the CDC and DC regulations change.

Other Health Requirements

All children must be up to date on childhood vaccines, according to CDC and DC Health Standards (e.g. MMR, DTaP, etc) before returning to school. Children are strongly encouraged to receive the flu vaccination. If a child is diagnosed with *any* contagious illness (e.g. Pink Eye), families are asked to notify the school immediately so that the school can inform other families in the class and hopefully prevent the spread of the illness. Children can return to school only once the contagious period has ended with written approval of a healthcare provider, telehealth visits are permissible.

The best way to keep the classroom safe is to limit exposure of children to anyone who is unvaccinated. Parents should be encouraged to be vaccinated, as well as other caregivers and family members. Children should not spend unmasked time with unvaccinated people especially indoors.

Communication

Gan Shalom will follow all confidentiality agreements and protect the privacy of individuals when disclosing health related information. Gan Shalom will alert families if anyone in the community tests positive, as well as inform anyone who has been in direct contact with a COVID-19 positive individual.

Testing positive for COVID-19 is not a moral failing and clear communication around a positive test is essential to the health of the entire Gan Shalom community.

All community members will be notified about a positive case within the school and inform anyone impacted by direct contact to follow CDC guidelines for quarantine and testing procedures.

All community members will be updated about the facilities operating status as *imminently* as possible and what steps will be required to ensure a safe reopening, when possible.

Daily Activities

Group Gatherings: When the entire class joins together, such as morning meetings or snack, children will be required to maintain appropriate social distancing depending on their environment (for example whether they are meeting outdoors or indoors). School year 2021-2022 will welcome 2 classes of students. Teachers have designed the school schedule to limit contact between students of each class, especially in the close-contact space of a bathroom.

Toileting/Diapering: we encourage families to equip their children with as many independent skills as possible to avoid unnecessary/excessive close interactions with staff.

Handwashing: will occur on a frequent basis, before and after eating, before and after playing outside, and intermittently between these activities (approximately every 30 minutes)

Eating: Teachers will work to host all food (snack, lunch, Shabbat, etc.) outdoors, where the risk of COVID-19 transmission is significantly less. A hygienic outdoor eating environment will be established. During extremely inclement weather, food will be hosted indoors, with extra precautions taken, such as larger distances between students.

Disinfecting, Sanitizing, and Cleaning

Each of these have different functions, cleaning removes germs without necessarily killing them, sanitizing reduces the number of germs by killing or removing them to a safe degree according to public health standards, and disinfecting kills all germs on surfaces and objects.

Gan Shalom will follow all OSSE requirements to ensure a clean and hygienic classroom environment.

Modified Indoor and Outdoor Policies

Research has shown that there is significantly less risk of COVID-19 transmission in outdoor environments. The Reggio model of education utilizes the outdoor environment as an important and influential classroom and Gan Shalom will take full advantage of the outdoor space this year. During extreme weather or temperatures, class will move indoors. When advanced notice is possible, such as a weather forecast, Gan Shalom will notify parents if class is to be held mostly indoors for the day.

Generally, Gan Shalom teachers will not host activities known to be higher transmission risk indoors, such as eating and singing. Higher risk activities will be hosted outdoors, on a regular basis as often as possible, where transmission is proven to be lower risk. When class moves indoors, teachers and parent volunteers will be vigilant about not mixing classes and will help children play and interact in ways that adhere to public health safety norms.

Specific protocols Gan Shalom institutes, and asks parental/caregiver support include:

Masks: Families should properly equip their children with a general understanding of the purpose of using masks, as well as how to safely secure/remove masks (only touching ear loops and folding corners together) without assistance. Each child should have multiple masks, stored individually with labels. Masks will be sent home each night to be cleaned or replaced. Extra masks need to be sent to school with children and actively replaced in their cubbies as they're used.

Increased Outdoor Play: Gan Shalom will take this opportunity to spend more time outdoors where there is considered to be less chance of spreading COVID. We will play outside every day unless there is extreme weather (e.g., excessive rain, a Code Red Heat Advisory, or it is very cold). We recommend sending your child to school in layers and ensuring they have weather appropriate clothing on a daily basis (rain boots, sunscreen, hats, gloves, etc). Classes will spend a good portion of time outdoors each day, rain or shine, using appropriate discretion for severity of rain and delay messy/wet play until the latter part of the day to eliminate the need to change clothing, as much as possible. We encourage children to wear a one-piece rainsuit or rain coat and pants, depending on the progress with potty training /toilet use and self-sufficient dressing

abilities. On wet/muddy days, we suggest bringing a garbage bag or towel for the car or stroller and save outfit changes for home.

Indoor Layout: The classroom will be laid out in a manner that children will have adequate play space with each other that does not interfere with social distancing. Barriers will be positioned in high traffic areas and partitions will be utilized as needed. All fabrics, rugs and materials that cannot be thoroughly cleaned easily will be removed.

Food: Children will wash hands before and after eating. Each child is required to bring a clean water bottle each day. Teachers will be responsible for refilling water bottles if needed to eliminate the use of water fountains.

Lunch: Lunches for the Rimonim class will be packed and provided by parents, according to the food guidelines outlined in the Gan Shalom Parent Handbook. Lunch will be served outside on individual yoga mats, as much as possible (except in extreme weather, etc). Teachers will assist children with setting up and opening lunches as needed.

Meetings: All outside-of-school meetings or group gatherings, such as board meetings, and parent-teacher conferences, will be virtual until further notice.

Closure

Gan Shalom will electronically notify, via Brightwheel and/or email, families as quickly as possible in the event of an emergency closure or indefinite closure. If the CDC recommends closure exceeding two weeks, Gan Shalom will readdress the needs of children and families to re-structure programming for continued learning and engagement. Gan Shalom will provide daily and weekly updates via Brightwheel, email and website posts. Teachers will provide suggestions for at-home activities (i.e. scavenger hunts, movement activities and step-by-step craft tutorials with loose parts), as well as facilitate developmentally appropriate learning with virtual class get-togethers to maintain relationships and continue community building.

REFERENCES

DC Definition of “close contact”:

Someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for at least 15 minutes (cumulatively) over a 24-hour period, starting from 2 days before illness onset (or for asymptomatic infected people, 2 days prior to positive test collection) until the time the infected person is isolated.

OSSE References:

[June 25, 2021 Health & Safety Guidance for Schools](#)

[August 11, 2021 COVID-19 Guidance for Childcare Facilities](#)

[June 15, 2021 COVID-19 Guidance on Cleaning & Disinfection](#)

COVID-19 Risky Behaviors

Please use this as a reference to gauge your choices. We ask that all parents abstain from high and medium high activities at least one week before volunteering in the classroom.

HIGH - Indoor parties, Bars and nightclubs, Playing contact sports (such as basketball), Airplane travel, indoor movie theater or live theater.

MEDIUM HIGH - Indoor gym exercise, hair salon or barbershop, nail salon, indoor restaurant or coffee shop.

Our Commitment to Keeping our Community Safe

As a community, we appreciate your flexibility and understanding as health recommendations are changing regularly and understanding that children may not be able to follow protocols as concretely as suggested. By practicing the Jewish value of “Kol Yisrael Areivim Zeh Bazeh,” families should be mindful that we are “responsible for one other,” and sustaining our community’s overall health. By maintaining safe and healthy environments outside of school hours and placing trust in our policies, we hope we can steer clear of any outbreaks. Gan Shalom acknowledges that together, we are better, and placing trust in one other, but even with precautions in place, we are all risking exposure to contracting communicable illness.

I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ agree that I have taken the appropriate measures/steps to prepare my child for learning in a COVID-19 safe environment, including practicing putting on and removing a face mask, thoroughly washing hands, and having a clear understanding of how to stay healthy and keep others safe during a pandemic.

I acknowledge and agree that my child’s attendance comes with inherent risks, including exposure to contagious symptoms, that may result in temporary exclusion from the program, illness and the possibility of contracting COVID-19. *I voluntarily accept and assume full responsibility for these risks, as well as any other risks involved with the necessary changes to programming, including prolonged time outdoors.*

I further agree to be forthcoming with health related information and agree to disclose any symptoms or contact with persons with symptoms.