SCOTT COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOL HEAD START

305 Legion Street

Weber City, VA 24290

Phone: (276) 386-6051 www.scottcountyheadstart.org

Cindy Raymond, Director

COVID-19 VACCINATION ~~& UNIVERSAL MASKING POLICY~~[[1]](#footnote-1)

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance to Scott County Public School Head Start (SCPSHS) around requirements of COVID-19 vaccinations ~~and universal masking~~.

SCPSHS’s priority is to implement the protocols needed to promote the safety of in-person learning environments for staff, contractors, volunteers, children, and their families.

Being fully vaccinated for COVID-19 and using a mask are two of the most effective mitigation strategies available to reduce transmission of SARS-COV-2. Additionally, including a regular SARS-COV-2 testing requirement for those approved for an exemption from the vaccination requirement is necessary to identify infected employees and separate them from the workplace to prevent transmission and to facilitate early medical intervention, when appropriate. Fully vaccinated staff are at much lower risk of infection and therefore, post lower transmission risk to the young unvaccinated children in their care. The CDC recommends screening testing for current infection of unvaccinated asymptomatic workers as a useful tool to detect SARS-COV-2 and stop transmission quickly.

**Scope:**

This policy applies to all staff, contractors whose activities involve contact with, or providing direct services to children and families, and also volunteers working directly with children of Scott County Public School Head Start. All individuals covered by this policy are required to be fully vaccinated by January 31, 2022 as a term and condition of employment, volunteer services, or contractual agreements. For the purpose of this policy, individuals are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after completing primary vaccination with a COVID-19 vaccine, with, if applicable, at least the minimum recommended interval between doses. For example, this includes two weeks after a second dose in a two-dose series, such as the Pfizer or Moderna vaccines, two weeks after a single-dose vaccine, such as the Johnson and Johnson vaccine, or two weeks after the second dose of any combination of two doses of different COVID-19 vaccines as part of one primary vaccination series. The Administration of Children and Families’ definition of fully-vaccinated is consistent with the CDC’s current guidance (as of January 26, 2022, a booster is not currently required). This definition is subject to change. All employees are required to report their vaccination status and to provide proof of vaccination. Staff must provide truthful and accurate information about their COVID-19 vaccination status, and, if applicable, their testing results. Staff not in compliance with this policy will be subject to discipline. Contractors are required to report their vaccination status and to provide proof of vaccination to their home agency. Volunteer vaccination status and proof of vaccination will be kept on file by Scott County Public School Head Start. Non-compliance of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action.

~~Universal masking for all individuals two years of age and older, with some noted exceptions, and all staff, contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families, and volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children will be effective November 30, 2021.~~

Staff, certain contractors, and volunteers may request an exemption from this mandatory vaccination ~~and masking~~ policy if the vaccine is medically contraindicated for them or medical necessity requires a delay in vaccination. They may also be legally entitled to a reasonable accommodation if they cannot be vaccinated ~~and wear a face covering~~ because of a disability, or if the provisions in this policy for vaccination, and/or testing for COVID-19, ~~and wearing a face covering~~ conflicts with a sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance. Requests for exemptions and reasonable accommodations must be initiated by the individual. All such requests will be handled in accordance with applicable laws and regulations and procedures outlined within this policy.

**Authority:**

Guidance for this policy is supported by the Interim Final Rule contained within the Code of

Federal Regulations 45 CFR Part 1302 – VACCINE AND MASK REQUIREMENTS TO

MITIGATE THE SPREAD OF COVID-19 IN HEAD START PROGRAMS; Head Start

Program Performance Standards; and the program’s Personnel Policies & Procedures Manual.

The revised standards (Amendment to 45 CFR Part 1302) are as follows:

**PART 1302 – PROGRAM OPERATIONS Subpart D – Health Program Services**

**1302.47. Safety Practices.**

(5) Safety practices. All staff and consultants follow appropriate practices to keep children safe during all activities, including, at a minimum:

~~(vi) Masking, using masks recommended by CDC, for all individuals 2 years of age or older when there are two or more individuals on a vehicle owned, leased, or arranged by the Head Start program; indoors in a setting when Head Start services are provided; and for those not fully vaccinated, outdoors in crowded settings or during activities that involve sustained close contact with other people except:~~

1. ~~Children or adults when they are either eating or drinking;~~
2. ~~Children when they are napping;~~
3. ~~When a person cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask because of a disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act; or~~
4. ~~When a child’s health care provider advises an alternative face covering to accommodate the child’s special health care needs.~~

**PART 1302 – PROGRAM OPERATIONS Subpart I – Human Resources Management**

**1302.93. Staff health and wellness**.

(a) A program must ensure each staff member has an initial health examination and a periodic re-examination as recommended by their health care provider in accordance with state, tribal, or local requirements, that include screeners or tests for communicable diseases, as appropriate. The program must ensure staff do not, because of communicable diseases, pose a significant risk to the health or safety of others in the program that cannot be eliminated or reduced by reasonable accommodation, in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act.

(1) All staff, and those contractors who activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families, must be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, other than those employees:

1. For whom a vaccine is medically contraindicated;
2. For whom medical necessity requires a delay in vaccination; or
3. Who are legally entitled to an accommodation with regard to the COVID-19 vaccination requirements based on an applicable Federal law.

(2) Those granted an accommodation outlined in paragraph (a)(1) of this section must undergo SARS-COV-2 testing for current infection at least weekly with those who have negative test results to remain in the classroom or working directly with children. Those with positive test results must be immediately excluded from the facility, so they are away from the children and staff until they are determined to no longer be infectious.

PART 1302 – PROGRAM OPERATIONS Subpart I – Human Resources Management

1302.94. Volunteers.

(a) A program must ensure volunteers have been screened for appropriate communicable diseases in accordance with state, tribal, or local laws. In the absence of state, tribal, or local law, the Health Services Advisory Committee must be consulted regarding the need for such screenings.

(1) All volunteers in classrooms or working directly with children other than their own must be fully vaccinated for COVID-19, other than those volunteers:

1. For whom a vaccine is medically contraindicated;
2. For whom medical necessity requires a delay in vaccination; or
3. Who are legally entitled to an accommodation with regard to the COVID-19 vaccination requirements based on an applicable Federal law.

(2) Those granted an accommodation outlined in paragraph (a)(1) of this section must undergo SARS-COV-2 testing for current infection at least weekly with those who have negative test results to remain in the classroom or work directly with children. Those with positive test results must be immediately excluded from the facility, so they are away from children and staff until they are determined to no longer be infectious.

~~Masking Procedures:~~

**~~OVERVIEW AND GENERAL INFORMATION~~**

~~SCPSHS will follow the guidelines for masking as contained within the Head Start Program Performance Standards and included below.~~

1. ~~Universal masking for all individuals two years of age and older, with some noted exceptions, effective immediately upon publication of the final rule, November 30, 2021~~
2. ~~Universal masking, with some noted exceptions, for all individuals two years of age and older when there are two or more individuals in a vehicle owned, leased, or arranged by the Head Start program~~
3. ~~When they are indoors in a setting where Head Start services are provided;~~
4. ~~For those not fully vaccinated, outdoors in crowded settings or during activities that involve close contact with other people~~

**~~MASKING REQUIREMENTS~~**

~~Program staff should choose a mask that is comfortable to wear and fits snugly. It must cover one’s mouth, nose, and chin. It can fasten around the ears or the back of the head, as long as it stays in place when one talks and moves. Masks with vents or exhalation valves are not allowed because they allow unfiltered breath to escape the masks.~~

~~Exceptions are noted for when individuals are eating or drinking; for children when they are napping; for the narrow subset of persons who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of a disability as defined by the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), consistent with CDC guidance on disability exemptions; and for children with special health care needs, for whom programs should work together with parents and follow the advice of the child’s health care provider for the best type of face covering.~~

~~The program will follow the doctor’s recommendation on the best type of face covering for any individual with special healthcare needs or a disability. Written documentation from a licensed physician must be on file at Central Office.~~

~~It should be noted that like all new skills, children will need to be taught the proper way to put a mask on and keep a mask on. While children are adaptable, they are still in the early stages of development and may need reminders and reinforcements to comply with this new practice. It is imperative that Head Start staff abide by the Standards of Conduct outlined in 1302.90 Personnel Policies in the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the program’s Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual namely that staff, consultants, contractors, and volunteers implement positive strategies to support children’s well-being and do not use harsh disciplinary practices that could endanger the health or safety of children.~~

~~SCPSHS will provide masks to staff to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Additionally, masks shall also be provided to children when they do not have their own mask and to contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families, and volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children.~~

**COVID-19 Vaccination Procedures**

**OVERVIEW AND GENERAL INFORMATION**

SCPSHS will follow the guidelines for COVID-19 vaccination requirements as contained within the Head Start Program Performance Standards effective November 30, 2021.

Vaccination for COVID-19 for all Head Start program staff, certain contractors, and volunteers in classrooms or working directly with children by January 31, 2021.

The definition of staff in 1305.2 is “paid adults who have responsibilities related to children and their families who are enrolled in programs.” Consistent with that definition, “all staff” as noted in the IFC, refers to all staff who work with enrolled Head Start children and families in any capacity regardless of funding source.

To be fully vaccinated by January 31, 2022, individuals must:

* Obtain the first dose of a two-dose vaccine no later than January 3, 2022 for Moderna or January 10. 2022 for Pfizer; and the second dose no later than January 31, 2022 or
* Obtain one dose of a single dose vaccine no later than January 31, 2022

For the purposes of this policy, staff, certain contractors, and volunteers will meet the requirement even if they have not yet completed the 14-day waiting period required for full vaccination. This timing flexibility applies only to the initial implementation and has no bearing on ongoing compliance.

**COVID-19 VACCINATION ACCESSABILITY**

Individuals are encouraged to schedule an appointment to obtain a COVID-19 vaccination through their medical provider, pharmacies, or local health departments. Staff will be compensated for up to four hours of time off to obtain a COVID-19 vaccination and up to eight hours of time off to recover from side effects directly related to receiving the COVID-19 vaccination until February 1, 2022.

**VACCINATION STATUS AND ACCEPTABLE FORMS OF PROOF**

The Head Start Act at section 647 has a provision on record-keeping, which allows the

Secretary to require certain records be kept and to support OHS in conducting its oversight of programs through monitoring. Pursuant to the statutory recordkeeping requirement in section 647 of the Head Start Act and in order to ensure programs are complying with the vaccination requirements, Scott County Public School Head Start will track and securely document the vaccination status of each staff member, including those for whom there is a temporary delay in vaccination, such as recent receipt of monoclonal antibodies or convalescent plasma. This documentation will be an ongoing process as new staff are onboarded.

Staff and ongoing volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children are required to submit proof of COVID-19 vaccination to the HR/Fiscal Officer with Scott County Public School Head Start via electronic mail or in-person at Central Office.

Periodic volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children are required to provide proof of COVID-19 vaccination, regardless of where they received vaccination. A visual confirmation will be conducted on each volunteer by center staff.

Agencies employing contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families should establish internal procedures on the process for securing proof of vaccination status for employees. These agencies will provide electronic proof of COVID-19 vaccination for necessary staff to the HR/Fiscal Officer with Scott County Public School Head Start.

All COVID-19 vaccines must be appropriately documented by the provider or supplier.

Examples of acceptable forms of proof of vaccination include:

* CDC COVID-19 vaccination record card (or a legible photo of the card)
* Documentation of vaccination from a healthcare provider or electronic health records, or
* State immunization information system record

If vaccinated outside of the United States, a reasonable equivalent of any of the previous examples would suffice.

The HR/Fiscal Officer will utilize ChildPlus as a staff vaccination tracking tool and maintain an electronic contractor file.

**VACCINE EXEMPTION PROCESS**

Under federal law, including the American with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, staff, contractors, and volunteers who cannot be vaccinated because of a disability under the ADA, medical condition, or sincerely held religious beliefs, practice, or observance may in some circumstances be granted an exemption. Reasonable accommodations, to the extent required by federal law, may be granted for employees who request and receive exemption from vaccination because of a disability, medical condition, or sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance.

For staff members, contractors, and ongoing volunteers who request a medical exemption from vaccination, all documentation confirming recognized clinical contraindications to COVID19 vaccines or medical need for delay, and which supports the request, must be signed and dated by a licensed practitioner, who is not the individual requesting the exemption, and who is acting within their respective scope of practice as defined by, and in accordance with, all applicable state and local laws.

Such documentation must contain all information specifying which of the authorized or approved COVID-19 vaccines are clinically contraindicated for the staff member to receive and the recognized clinical reasons for the contraindications or the recognized clinical reasons necessitating delay in vaccination; and a statement by the authenticating practitioner recommending that the staff member be exempted from the program’s COVID-19 vaccination requirements based on the recognized clinical contraindications or allowed to delay vaccination.

For religious accommodations, a written explanation should be provided of the individual’s sincerely held religious beliefs, and/or appropriate documentation from their religious leader regarding the religious belief(s) that conflict with the COVID-19 vaccination requirement.

Staff and ongoing volunteers that work directly with children of whom are seeking a COVID-19 vaccine exemption for medical or religious reasons should submit required documentation outlined within this policy to the HR/Fiscal Officer. All exemptions will be reviewed and approved by the Head Start Director or the HR/Fiscal Officer in his/her absence in accordance to the guidelines outlined within this policy. Agencies employing contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families should establish internal procedures on the process for reviewing and reaching determinations regarding exemption requests. These agencies will provide a copy of COVID-19 vaccine exemptions for necessary staff to the HR/Fiscal Officer with Scott County Public School Head Start.

The HR/Fiscal Officer will utilize ChildPlus as a staff and ongoing volunteer exemption tracking tool and maintain an electronic contractor file. Exemptions for periodic volunteers will be kept on file in their child’s health folder within the classroom.

In granting such exemptions or accommodations, programs must ensure that they minimize the risk of transmission of SARS-COV-2 to at-risk individuals, in keeping with their obligation to protect the health and safety of staff, children, and families. To that end, it is a reasonable alternative that staff, contractors, and volunteers granted an accommodation be required to undergo testing at least weekly for current SARS-COV-2 infection, and SARS-COV-2 transmission among individuals without symptoms is a significant driver of COVID-19, ACF has determined it is necessary to prevent the pre-symptomatic and asymptomatic transmission of SARS-COV-2 from unvaccinated staff, contractors and volunteers, through a requirement for a weekly screening test. Although more regular screening testing may identify even more cases, ACF has decided to require a minimum testing of only a weekly basis, which is in line with CDC recommendations.

Staff who work in the classroom or directly with children and ongoing volunteers who work in the classroom that have received an approved COVID-19 accommodation will submit to weekly testing. This test should be self-administered in the presence of another Head Start staff member. Results will be documented by the witness and reviewed by the Head Start Director and HR/Fiscal Officer. Individuals administering COVID-19 tests while in the centers should isolate themselves until the results are read.

Periodic volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children will be required to submit a negative COVID-19 before volunteering. This test should be self-administered in the presence of and read by a Head Start staff member. Visual verification of the negative test will serve as compliance to this policy.

A negative test result from a health care provider will meet the weekly testing requirement so long as it does not exceed 72 hours.

 Agencies employing contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families should establish internal procedures on the process for testing and validation of COVID-19 results. Agencies should refrain from accepting negative tests results that exceed 72 hours. Results will be documented by a designated employee determined by the agency and reviewed by the Head Start Director and HR/Fiscal Officer.

Any individuals with positive test results will be immediately excluded from the facility, so they are away from children and staff until they have determined to no longer be infectious.

The costs of regular testing for those granted an exemption is an allowable use of Head Start funds. The costs to cover these tests will be paid by the program utilizing COVID-19 funds. Once those funds have been exhausted, the program will evaluate if sustain continued funding is available to further cover testing.

Individuals are encouraged to first seek free testing methods available within the community, other government programs, or insurance prior to requesting a test from the Head Start program.

**PENALITIES FOR FALSE STATEMENTS AND RECORDS**

Staff who attempt to falsify documentation required within this policy will be subject to Group II offense disciplinary action outlined within the program’s Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual. Agencies who employ contractors whose activities involve contact with or providing direct services to children and families will be responsible for establishing and maintaining disciplinary policies for staff who falsify documentation pertaining to this policy. Violation of this policy for agencies who employ eligible contractors will result in potential withdrawal of contractual services. Volunteers who attempt to falsify documentation required within this policy may be prohibited from future volunteering.

**Confidentiality and Privacy:**

All medical records must be kept confidential and stored separately from an employer’s personnel files, pursuant to the ADA and the Rehabilitation Act. Medical information collected from individuals, including COVID-19 vaccination information, exemptions, test results, and any other information obtained as a result of testing, will be treated in accordance with applicable laws and policies on confidentiality and privacy.

**Policy Oversight and Dissemination:**

This policy will be maintained by the Head Start Director and will be added to the program’s Personnel Policies and Procedures Manual. All staff and contractors whose activities involve contact with children will receive a copy of the policy. Additionally, this policy will be available to the public for review on the program’s website. Volunteers working in classrooms or directly with children will be advised to review the program’s policy prior to program participation.

**Questions**

Please direct any questions regarding this policy to the Head Start Director, (276) 386-6051.

1. This policy was approved by the Scott County School Board on 2/1/22 and Policy Council on 2/17/22. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)