

New York City Department of Education Guidance for In-Person Assessments by Preschool Multidisciplinary Evaluation Sites during COVID-19 Pandemic

Beginning July 13, 2020, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) will allow Multidisciplinary Evaluation Sites (MDE sites) to conduct in-person assessments.

MDE sites must follow the *Procedures for Arranging In-Person Preschool Assessments* (below), and must develop and implement protocols in accordance with the *MDE Site Requirements for In-Person Assessments* (below), as well as any other relevant guidance issued by the NYS Department of Health or NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene.

Procedures for Arranging In-Person Preschool Assessments

Review all preschool evaluations currently open. Contact the parent of each child and inform them that:

- In-person assessments can now be conducted
- Remote assessments are still available and preferred at this time
- For in-person assessments, parents would need to provide consent and agree to follow specialized protocols for the health of all involved

Document the conversation with the parent, including the parent's decision, and maintain this documentation.

If the parent requests an in-person assessment, discuss the [Consent for In-Person Preschool Evaluation](#) form with the parent. This is separate from any other consents required by law or regulation.

- Consent for In-Person Preschool Evaluation must be obtained before the first day of evaluation. This consent may be obtained by email.
- The parent can consent by email to the provider, either by sending the signed form, or by stating in the email that they have reviewed the consent for in-person assessment, agree to its conditions, and want the assessment to be provided in-person.
- The consent must be maintained and sent to the CPSE.

Assessments may be conducted at the MDE site, or the student's home or another community location (as appropriate).

If a family is interested in an in-person assessment but the MDE site is not available to conduct it, contact the CPSE.

MDE Site Requirements for In-Person Assessments

Implement Health Plan:

MDE sites must put a plan in place that complies with all guidance on physical distancing; personal protective equipment; hygiene, cleaning and disinfection; communication and signage; screening; and physical capacity limitations as described in:

- The NYC Health Department's [COVID-19: RESTART Guidance for Businesses](#): Consult the section applicable to the NY Forward Phase during which the provider is initiating or resuming in-person services or general operations.

- The NYSDOH's [Interim Advisory for In-Person Special Education Services and Instruction During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#) (June 8, 2020)
- The NYSDOH's [Child Care and Day Camp Programs Guidelines](#)

We encourage all providers and families to avail themselves of COVID-19 diagnostic testing. Tests are free at NYC Health + Hospital testing sites. Visit nyc.gov/covidtesting for more information.

Face Covering Requirements

All MDE site staff members interacting with children/families must wear a face covering during the entire course of the session.

Clinicians may supply alternate face coverings (such as face shields that are transparent at or around the mouth) for assessments that require visualization of the movement of the child's mouth. These alternate face coverings may also be worn by the clinician, for children who benefit from being able to see more of the clinician's face (for example, due to a hearing impairment).

Everyone who will be present for the session and is 2 years or older must wear a face covering, if it can be tolerated.

Clinicians should monitor children's ability to keep the face covering/mask on and adjust intervention strategies to best meet children's needs.

Physical Distancing

To the extent possible while maintaining the efficacy of the assessment, clinicians should keep 6 feet of physical distance from the child and any other person present.

Anyone who is not participating in the assessment must maintain at least 6 feet of physical distance from others who are not members of the same household.

Make sure that family and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group or individuals consistently interact.

For MDE facilities, post physical distancing markers using tape or signs that denote at least 6 feet of spacing in areas where multiple persons might be present. Limit the size of gatherings, support healthy hand hygiene, and restrict nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving other groups at the same time.

Healthy Hand Hygiene Before, During and After Session

All providers must put plans in place to make sure that:

- All parents and students present for the session wash their hands for at least 20 seconds using soap and water or use a hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol before and after the session (including upon entry into the MDE facility).
- All clinicians wash their hands for 20 seconds using soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that is at least 60% alcohol before and after each assessment session.

- All clinicians who practice more hands-on assessment approaches should put on gloves and leave them on for the entire session.
 - Leave gloves on until the end of the session. Remove by grasping the inside of the wrist end and pulling inside-out over your fingers, then discard into a plastic bag or lined trash can. Use alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol or wash hands with soap and water for 20 seconds after removing gloves.
 - If gloves must be replaced for some reason during the session (for example, contact with body fluids), remove them, wash hands as described above, and put on a new pair of gloves.
 - Please note that wearing gloves does not take the place of thorough handwashing.

Use of Toys and Other Materials

Home-based assessments

The practice of bringing toys or other materials into multiple homes has the potential to spread COVID-19 or other infections. Therefore, until further notice, it is prohibited to bring materials and toys (other than paper) from outside into home-based settings, with the exception of a computer and single-use assessment tools. Assessment toolkits with manipulatives may be brought in, but only if they can be safely cleaned/sanitized. All materials brought into homes must be cleaned/disinfected between each use according to NYC Health Department's [COVID-19: General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](#).

Agency location settings

Follow the NYC Health Department's [COVID-19: General Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfection for Non-Health Care Settings](#).

Increased Cleaning, Disinfecting and Ventilation

MDE sites must adhere to guidelines from the CDC, NYSDOH and NYC Health Department with regard to:

- Cleaning frequently touched surfaces (such as equipment, door handles, sink handles and drinking fountains) at least daily, and cleaning shared objects between uses
- Eliminating materials from use that cannot be disinfected

MDE sites must ensure ventilation systems operate properly and increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible.

MDE sites must follow NYC Health Department's [Guidance for Returning Building Water Systems to Service After Prolonged Shutdown if applicable](#).

Required Screening Protocols

MDE sites must have plans to ensure that:

- Clinicians, families, and staff implement ongoing self-screening prior to the session to determine whether they or anyone else who intends to be present for the session:



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- Has [COVID-19 symptoms](#) (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell)
- Has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days
- Has been told by a health care provider or the [NYC Test & Trace Corps](#) to remain home due to being exposed to COVID-19
- Is required to quarantine based on the New York State COVID-19 Travel Advisory (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>)
- **If any of the above is TRUE, the sessions should be rescheduled for at least 14 days out or those sessions can be conducted remotely, in line with the guidance issued on April 23, 2020.**
- On the day of the session, before the clinician enters the home or as part of a coordinated facility intake process, contact the family to determine whether the child or anyone in the household:
 - Has a fever, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell, etc.
 - Has tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days
 - Has been told by their health care provider or the NYC Test & Trace Corps to remain home due to being exposed to COVID-19
 - Is required to quarantine based on the New York State COVID-19 Travel Advisory (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>)
 - **If any of the above is TRUE, the sessions should be rescheduled for at least 14 days out or those sessions can be conducted remotely.**
- If a session is rescheduled due to concerns about COVID-19, the clinician/agency should call the family the night before the rescheduled session to confirm that it is safe to proceed.
- It is important to be able to seamlessly shift back to remote assessments. In the event that the assessment can no longer be conducted in person, follow guidance on remote assessments.

While the Committees on Special Education offices are working remotely, you can get direct support from a Committee on Special Education staff member via email.

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Consent for In-Person Preschool Evaluation

| | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|----------|--|
| Student's Name: | Student ID#: | DOB: | |
| Address: | | Apt #: | |
| City: | State: New York | ZIP: | |
| Name of Provider: | | Phone #: | |
| Provider Agency: | | Phone #: | |

Instructions: This consent form must be completed before initiating or resuming an in-person evaluation. A separate consent is required for each assessment type (e.g., Social History, Psychological).

I, (Parent/Guardian's Full Name) _____, consent to have my child's preschool special education evaluation conducted in person. I understand that remote assessments are still available and preferred during the COVID-19 declared state of emergency. I agree to the conditions below so that my child's evaluation can be conducted in the safest way possible.

1. Everyone who will be present for the session and is 2 years of age or older will wear a face covering.
2. My child will wear a face covering during sessions unless it is not medically or developmentally appropriate or the clinician determines that it interferes with the assessment.
3. Everyone present but not directly involved in the assessment will remain at least 6 feet away from where the assessment is taking place.
4. Everyone present will wash their hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer immediately before the session begins and immediately after it ends.
5. If the assessment is being conducted in my home, I will provide the clinician access to a sink, soap and paper towels to wash and dry their hands after arriving, immediately before beginning the session and after the session ends.
6. Before each session, I will monitor the health of myself, my child and others in my household for COVID-19 symptoms, such as fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, sore throat, new loss of taste or smell. I will notify the agency if anyone in my household is sick or has any of these symptoms in advance of the session or when I am asked by the provider before the session.
7. I will notify the agency if any of the following occur for any member of my household:
 - a. Having tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 14 days
 - b. Being told by a doctor or the NYC Test & Trace team to remain home due to COVID-19
 - c. Required to quarantine based on the New York State COVID-19 Travel Advisory (<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>)
8. If an in-person assessment must be cancelled and replaced with a remotely conducted assessment, the remotely conducted assessment is instead of and not in addition to the in-person assessment.
9. The clinician will not bring toys or materials into the home to use during the session other than paper and assessment tools.

Parent/Guardian Name (Print)

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date