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The spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in the world has us all on heightened alert. The recently confirmed cases in Montgomery County have increased that alertness. There has been no exposure to anyone at Bright Eyes to this point, but we are writing to share how Bright Eyes is working to sustain a healthy environment for our children, families and employees.

-We will be more vigilant in handwashing –staff must be pro-active to ensure children are following proper hand-washing procedure. (20 seconds of scrubbing under running water, with soap). Remember, handwashing is the best method to prevent the spread of germs!

-We will continue to sanitize equipment to reduce the spread of germs.

-When we are notified that an employee is sick we will ask for a specific diagnosis and advise them to stay home until they are symptom free or have a Dr.'s note to return.

-We will notify parents when their child present symptoms and isolate the child until pickup.

-We will provide tissues for use on door handles and punch-clocks.

-Limit parent events until this State of Emergency has been lifted.

Parents can help us also:

-Keep sick children at home. No matter the type of illness, bringing sick children to child care or school only perpetuates the problem. Children must be symptom free for 24 hours (without medication) to attend. Children should not be brought in under the influence of fever-reducing medications as that only masks the illness and advances the spread of germs.

-If your child is sick notify us immediately. We post exposure notices outside each classroom, as required. Posting this information will provide you with the best information that we can. Please note that the signs will provide you with needed information while not violating HIPPA guidelines. We ask that you not overwhelm our staff by asking questions about illness posters. They can not tell you information about specific children or staff.

-Be vigilant about handwashing at home and at the center. Remember the recommendation for handwashing is for 20 seconds (long enough to sing the A, B, C's or Happy Birthday twice). Use soap and running water. Using soap is the best method to destroy germs. Only use hand sanitizers when soap is not available and always monitor children when using hand sanitizers.

-Teach children good cough and sneezing hygiene. Encourage your children to use a tissue or their elbows, but not their hands, when they cough or sneeze. We will remind them also.

Maryland has announced a State of Emergency due to COVID-19. Governor Hogan has addressed that there may be long term closures of schools and child care. Please know that is not our goal. Our goal is to be open everyday for you. Let's all take the necessary precautions to protect the health of all.

At Bright Eyes we will continue to monitor the situation and keep you advised!!

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

Yes. COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in parts of the United States. Risk of infection with COVID-19 is higher for people who are close contacts of someone known to have COVID-19, for example healthcare workers, or household members. Other people at higher risk for infection are those who live in or have recently been in an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19. Learn more about places with ongoing spread at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html#geographic>.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but is now spreading from person to person. The virus is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. It also may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath

What are severe complications from this virus?

Some patients have pneumonia in both lungs, multi-organ failure and in some cases death.

How can I help protect myself?

People can help protect themselves from respiratory illness with everyday preventive actions.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled from an area with ongoing spread of COVID-19?

If you have traveled from an affected area, there may be restrictions on your movements for up to 2 weeks. If you develop symptoms during that period (fever, cough, trouble breathing), seek medical advice. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.

