

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

This document outlines Austin Public Health (APH) recommendations on COVID-19 operations and best practices for 2022 youth and summer camp programs. These recommendations are intended to assist in the creation of policies that can be given to parents and staff. Following these recommendations to the greatest extent possible will help minimize the risk of coronavirus transmission to keep staff, children, and families safe and healthy.

Some of the mitigation measures in this document should be implemented throughout the summer, regardless of the COVID-19 Community Level, while others should be considered based on the current CDC [COVID-19 Community Level](#).

A program may also choose to increase mitigation measures regardless of the Community Level, based on camp-specific circumstances, such as if there is a COVID-19 outbreak in the camp or if the camp serves individuals who are at risk. APH supports these decisions.

This document contains recommendations on the following topics:

- A. Vaccination
- B. Considerations for At Risk Individuals
- C. Masks
- D. Field Trips and Transportation
- E. Gatherings and Events
- F. Maintaining Healthy Environments
- G. Food Service, Meals, and Snacks
- H. Ventilation
- I. Testing
- J. Sick Staff Members or Campers in Isolation
- K. Notifications, Close Contacts, and Quarantine
- L. Contacting APH to Report COVID-19 Cases or Ask Questions

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

A. Vaccination

Getting the COVID-19 vaccine is an important way for camp operators, staff, and campers to keep from getting and spreading COVID-19. Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. [COVID-19 vaccines](#) available in the United States are effective at protecting people, including [children](#), from getting seriously ill, being hospitalized, and dying. When infections occur among vaccinated people, they tend to be milder than among those who are unvaccinated. As with vaccines for other diseases, people who are [up to date](#) with their COVID-19 vaccines are optimally protected.

Summer camps can encourage staff to get vaccinated and stay [up to date](#) with any necessary booster shots and encourage families to vaccinate their eligible children and get any booster shots that their child may be eligible for. Note that as of April 28, 2022, the COVID-19 vaccine has not been approved for use in children under the age of 5. The vaccine for children under the age of 5 is expected to be approved as early as June 2022.

To promote vaccination among staff and families, summer camps are encouraged to:

- Include vaccination information as part of enrollment activities for families entering the program. Share information about the COVID-19 vaccine for children, including the following information from the CDC:
 - [6 Things to Know About COVID-19 Vaccination for Children](#)
 - [COVID-19 Vaccines for Children and Teens](#)
 - [Resources to Promote the COVID-19 Vaccine for Children & Teens](#), which includes social media graphics, posters, videos, and a customizable parent letter
- Let staff and families know where they can get vaccinated against COVID-19 and promote COVID-19 vaccination locations near your camp. To find vaccination locations:
 - Visit [vaccines.gov](#) ([vacunas.gov](#) for Spanish) or <http://austintexas.gov/covid19-vaccines>
 - Text your ZIP code to 438829 (822862 for Spanish)
 - Call 1-800-232-0233
- Establish supportive policies and practices that make getting vaccinated as easy and convenient as possible. See CDC's [Workplace Vaccination Program](#) for steps employers can take to increase COVID-19 vaccination among workers. Offering flexible, supportive sick leave options (e.g., paid sick leave) for employees to get vaccinated or who have side effects after vaccination. See CDC's [Post-Vaccination Considerations for Workplaces](#) for more information.
- Partner with Austin Public Health to host a vaccine event at your camp for staff and families.
 - To host a **vaccine information session**, complete [this questionnaire](#). APH health educators will provide information about the safety, efficacy, and benefits of COVID-19 vaccines and answer questions.
 - To host a **pop-up vaccination clinic**, complete [this questionnaire](#).

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

B. Considerations for At Risk Individuals

APH advises camps to share the following information with staff and families that they can consider when thinking about their own risk levels and prevention measures.

Per the CDC, some people are more likely than others to become severely ill if they get COVID-19, which means they are more likely to be hospitalized, need intensive care, require a ventilator to help them breathe, or die. Those people include [older adults](#), people with certain [medical conditions](#), and [pregnant and recently pregnant people](#). People at higher risk for severe illness should talk with their healthcare provider about how best to protect themselves from COVID-19. [Staying up to date with COVID-19 vaccines](#) (getting primary series and booster) and following [preventive measures for COVID-19](#) are important. This is especially important for people who are older as well as those who have severe health conditions or more than one health condition.

Per the CDC, people who are unvaccinated are at greater [risk of becoming infected with and dying from COVID-19](#) than those who are vaccinated. Those who are vaccinated and received booster doses had the lowest risk of becoming infected or dying from COVID-19.

Those who are at high risk for severe illness and those who are unvaccinated can take the following steps to protect themselves:

- Get vaccinated and boosted as soon as eligible
- Wear a well-fitting mask
- Test early

People who have symptoms should get tested using a viral test (rapid antigen or PCR) for COVID-19 right away. People should also test at least 5 days after known or suspected close contact to COVID-19. For people who test positive for COVID-19 and have [one or more health conditions](#) that increase their risk of severe illness, [treatment may be available](#) that could lower their chance of becoming very sick. These people are advised to contact a health professional right away after a positive test to determine if they are eligible for treatment, even if symptoms are mild. Treatment must be started within the first few days to be effective.

C. Masks

Camps may choose to implement masking at any level to protect the health and safety of their staff and children in their care. Implement policies that can be shown to parents before camp begins so they are aware of when you may choose to implement different mitigation strategies depending on the situations within your program, at any time during low or medium transmission. It is recommended that administrators regularly check the [APH COVID-19 Key Indicators dashboard](#) to inform their decisions.

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

APH advises that masks be worn in the following circumstances:

- People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a well-fitted mask for 10 full days any time they are around others inside their home or in public (regardless of whether they are vaccinated or have recently had COVID-19), per CDC. They should not go to places where they are unable to wear a mask.
- When the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) is high, summer camps should require that everyone ages 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status, wear a well-fitting mask indoors.
- Summer camps at their discretion may choose to require that people wear masks indoors when the community level is not high based on the program's circumstances. APH supports the decisions of these camps.
- Support individual staff and family decisions to mask, even if not required.
 - Model and teach respect for individual choices regarding masking. Make clear that bullying of individuals for their personal choices about masking will not be tolerated.
 - Keep in mind that there are many reasons people may choose to continue to mask when the community level is low or medium.
 - The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) provides a list of considerations for families when deciding whether their child should mask. These factors include:
 - If their child is 2, 3, or 4 years old and currently ineligible for COVID-19 vaccine
 - If their child is immunocompromised and may not have a protective immune response to the COVID-19 vaccine, or is at high risk for severe COVID-19 illness
 - If their child is not immunized
 - If other members of their family are at higher risk of severe disease or are not immunized
 - If they live in a community with "high" COVID-19 transmission
- Face coverings should not be worn by:
 - Children younger than 2 years old.
 - A person with a disability who cannot wear a mask, or cannot safely wear a mask, because of the disability as defined by the Americans with Disabilities Act (42 U.S.C. 12101 et seq.)
 - Children who are sleeping
 - Anyone participating in activities where the mask could get wet, like swimming or water play
- Refer to the CDC guidance on the [Use and Care of Masks](#) and on [Types of Masks and Respirators](#) for more information.
- Per the CDC, in general, people do not need to wear masks when outdoors.

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

D. Field Trips and Transportation

This spring there have been COVID-19 clusters and outbreaks in Austin-Travis County schools that may be linked to field trips and field trip transportation. To reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission on field trips, APH has the following recommendations:

- When the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) is high in Austin-Travis County, suspend all field trips. Postpone trips to other counties that have a high COVID-19 Community Level.
- Anyone who is sick or showing symptoms should stay home and get tested.
- Open or crack windows in buses and other forms of transportation, if doing so does not pose a safety risk. Keeping windows open at least a few inches improves air circulation.
- Consider requiring that participants mask on field trip transportation in the following circumstances:
 - When the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) is medium
 - When the Community Level is low, but there is poor ventilation on the bus, such as if the windows cannot easily open
 - When the Community Level is low, but participants will be on the bus for extended periods of time

E. Gatherings and Events

Summer camps may alter or implement how they hold gathering, events, guest presentations, or assemblies at any community level, dependent on camp needs or situations.

At all community levels, APH recommends camps do the following:

- Maximize ventilation in spaces where events/gatherings are held. The CDC offers [tools and tips to improve ventilation](#) in buildings.
- At venue entrances, make masks available to those who may want them but have not brought their own. Ensure access to handwashing facilities on site and make alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol available throughout the venue.
- Post visible signage throughout the venue to remind visitors, staff, and campers of hygiene and safety protocols.

APH further recommends camps follow these measures when the [COVID-19 Community Level](#) is medium or high:

Medium

- Masks optional but recommend they be worn indoors when physical distancing of 6 feet is not possible
- Consider implementing physical distancing of 6ft between people of different households, including between graduates, faculty, guests, and presenters

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

High

- Require universal indoor masking for all people ages 2 and older, regardless of vaccination status
- Implement physical distancing of 6 feet between people of different households
- Hold the event outdoors
 - If it is not possible to hold the event outdoors, to allow 6 feet of distancing between people from different households either:
 - Use a larger venue,
 - Divide up the event into multiple smaller gatherings, or
 - Only invite visitors or guests whose presence or service is essential to the event/gathering
- Avoid serving refreshments and food indoors so that people can remain masked

F. Maintaining Healthy Environments

Summer camps are urged to prepare and implement a health and safety plan that explains how the program is operating to control and reduce the transmission of COVID-19. Even when the COVID-19 Community Level is low, camps are advised to have a plan in place for prevention measures that can be activated when the COVID-19 Community Level rises. It is recommended that an electronic or hard copy of this plan be shared with staff, parents, and guardians, or at a minimum, be provided to staff, parents, and guardians upon request. Summer camps are encouraged to post visible signage displaying the requirements of the health and safety policy or plan at or near main entrances and pick-up/drop-off areas to provide clear notice to employees, customers, and visitors.

G. Food Service, Meals, and Snacks

APH recommends camps implement the following measures during meals and snacks:

- Clean frequently touched surfaces. Surfaces that come in contact with food should be washed, rinsed, and sanitized before and after meals.
- Ensure staff and campers wash hands with soap and water before and after eating.
- Improve ventilation in food preparation, service, and seating areas.

APH further recommends camps follow these measures adapted from the [CDC](#) food service guidance for schools based on the [COVID-19 Community Level](#):

Medium

- Staff should wear masks during meal preparation and service.
- Consider increasing physical distance during meals and snacks while indoors.
- When possible, have meals and snacks outdoors.

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

High

- Staff should mask during meal preparation and service.
- Campers should mask when moving through the food service line.
- Maximize physical distance as much as possible during meals and snacks while indoors.
- When possible, have meals and snacks outdoors.

H. Ventilation

Improving ventilation is an important COVID-19 prevention strategy that can reduce the number of virus particles in the air. Bringing fresh outdoor air into a building helps keep virus particles from concentrating inside. This can be done by opening multiple doors and windows, using child-safe fans to increase the effectiveness of open windows, and making changes to the HVAC or air filtration systems. Consider portable air cleaners that use [high-efficiency particulate air \(HEPA\)](#) filters to enhance air cleaning.

During transportation, open or crack windows in buses and other forms of transportation, if doing so does not pose a safety risk. Keeping windows open at least a few inches improves air circulation.

For more specific information about maintenance, use of ventilation equipment, actions to improve ventilation, and other ventilation considerations, refer to these CDC web pages:

- [Ventilation in Schools and Child Care Programs](#)
- [Ventilation FAQs](#)
- [Interactive Ventilation Tool](#)

I. Testing

It is recommended that staff and campers exhibiting new or worsening symptoms of possible COVID-19 and close contacts of someone with COVID-19 seek a COVID-19 test. Refer to the APH testing guidance in the “Austin Public Health Recommendations for Child Care Programs” posted [here](#). Staff and families can find testing information and locations at <https://www.austintexas.gov/covid-testinfo>.

J. Sick Staff Members or Campers in Isolation

COVID-19 symptoms may appear 2-14 days after exposure to the virus. Anyone can have mild to severe symptoms. People with these symptoms may have COVID-19:

- | | |
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| • Fever or chills | • Headache |
| • Cough | • New loss of taste or smell |
| • Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing | • Sore throat |
| • Fatigue | • Congestion or runny nose |
| • Muscle or body aches | • Nausea or vomiting |
| | • Diarrhea |

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

Plan to have an isolation room or area, preferably with access to a separate restroom, and ensure that isolated children are supervised by an adult. Immediately separate staff and campers exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms.

Communicate to staff and families that if they have COVID-like symptoms they should stay home. Encourage anyone exhibiting new or worsening [symptoms](#) of possible COVID-19 to seek a COVID-19 test (rapid antigen or PCR).

Symptomatic individuals and those who have tested positive must isolate. Follow the detailed isolation guidance in the “Austin Public Health Quarantine and Isolation Guidance for Child Care Programs” posted [here](#).

COVID-19 is a reportable condition. Summer camps must report COVID-19 cases among campers and staff to APH. See section L below for more information.

K. Notifications, Close Contacts, and Quarantine

When a COVID-19 case is reported to the camp, camps should follow [CDC guidance to determine who is a close contact](#) of the COVID-positive person. (Note, schools hosting camps should follow [CDC guidance for determining close contacts and quarantine in K-12 schools](#).) Camps should promptly notify staff and families of campers who are identified as close contacts. Staff and families of campers who are not close contacts should be provided general notification when there are COVID-19 cases in the camp.

The CDC offers [customizable letters](#) for general case notifications and notifications for close contacts. Camp notifications should include advice on monitoring for the development of symptoms, and notifications for close contacts should also include quarantine, testing, and masking guidance.

Follow the detailed guidance on quarantine in the “Austin Public Health Quarantine and Isolation Guidance for Child Care Programs” and the “How Long to Quarantine: Information for Child Care & Pre-K – 12th Grade Schools” flow chart posted on the [APH COVID-19 web page for child care providers](#). These documents provide information on who at the camp needs to quarantine after close contact with a COVID-positive person and for how long.

Camps and families can also refer to the [CDC Quarantine Calculator](#).

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs

May 5, 2022

L. Contacting APH to Report COVID-19 Cases or Ask Questions

Report all cases among campers and staff to APH within 48 hours by calling the Nurse Line at 512-972-5560 or by emailing ChildCareInfo@austintexas.gov and including “Requesting call back” in the subject line. If you find there is a wait time when calling the nurse line, emailing to request a call back can save you time. Please do not include personally identifiable information in emails to APH. (Child care programs or schools that are hosting summer camps should not call the nurse line to report cases, but should continue with reporting cases electronically.)

When you speak with the nurse line to report COVID-19 cases, you will be asked the following information:

1. Camp name
2. Camp address
3. Caller name
4. Caller role or title
5. Caller phone number
6. Caller email address
7. Day camp or overnight camp
8. Total number of new COVID-19 cases you are reporting among campers
9. Ages or age ranges of COVID-positive campers (Examples: All are 9-10 years old; Three 10-12 year-olds and two 15-16 year-olds; All are 4 years old; etc.)
10. Total number of new COVID-19 cases you are reporting among staff
11. Whether any of the cases are related (same group or cohort, siblings, etc.)
12. Whether the close contacts of the cases been notified and been advised about who should quarantine*
13. Information on closures in connection with the case(s) you are reporting – If you plan to temporarily suspend camp for any group(s) of campers (if yes, for how many groups) or for the entire camp

* [Per CDC](#), those who were exposed to COVID-19 should quarantine if they are not vaccinated, are not [up to date](#) on their COVID-19 vaccinations, and/or have not had confirmed COVID-19 within the past 90 days

Note, APH will not collect any personally identifiable information related to COVID-19 cases or close contacts.

When taking case reports, the APH nurses can also offer guidance on next steps and answer questions. **Camps are also welcome to contact APH by email at ChildCareInfo@austintexas.gov or by calling the APH Nurse Line at 512-972-5560 to ask COVID-19 questions, even if not reporting cases.**

Please note that this email box and the nurse line are intended for use by camps and child care programs. Please do not share them out to families, as APH does not have the capacity to respond to

Austin Public Health COVID-19 Recommendations for 2022 Youth & Summer Camp Programs



May 5, 2022

questions from individual families whose children are in child care and camps. **Camps can give parents who have questions about APH guidance a copy of the “COVID-19 Recommendations for Families with Children in Child Care & Camps” flier which is available in 9 languages in the Additional Resources for Child Care Programs section of the [APH Child Care Providers webpage](#).** This flier contains information about when to mask, quarantine, test, and isolate.