June 5, 2020

Dear Parents: Many of you participated in one of the 2 Parent Forums on Monday, June 1, 2020 on our reopening efforts and general COVID-19 reopening guidelines. Some parents were unable to join us. Since the sessions were recorded, a transcript of all the questions asked by parents and responses to each are provided below. We will keep you updated and informed on any changes to or lifting of our COVID-19 related policies and procedures. All documents related to the Parent Forums will be posted on the CentroNia.org website parent link. Remember, many of these procedures are in effect temporarily to battle COVID-19. We all look forward to when the procedures are no longer relevant or needed. Thank you.

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Q1. What if they get a non-covid virus or ear infection? For example, what if they test negative for the virus and the doctor finds there is an ear infection? Do they still need to stay home for the 14 days or just get a doctors note? (1:15pm, Erin O)

Response: For non-COVID 19 related health issues, please follow our pre-COVID procedures, The 14 days stay-at-home rule is specifically related to COVID-19 symptoms.

Q2. Will families be required to report if someone in their household tests positive for COVID? (1:17pm, Tiffany Longman)

Response: Yes. This is a major factor in mitigating the introduction or spread of the virus at all our centers. It is required to safeguard all the other children and employees in the buildings.

Q3. Will we be notified if a family member in class tests positive? (1:17pm, Robert Bettman)

Response: In the event a family member of a child that is in the same class as your child, yes, you will be notified. For reasons of confidentiality, the name of the family/child will not be released.

Q4. Will there be any routine COVID testing available to staff or children regardless of exhibiting symptoms? (1:18pm, Tiffany Longman)

Response: Testing in DC, MD, and VA is still mostly limited to individuals who exhibit symptoms (and have doctor referrals) or have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19. CentroNia has requested that OSSE seek an exception/waiver of these requirements for all child care providers.

Q5. Will we be notified of presumptive cases within the building? (1:18pm, Danielle & Jarrett Jacobs)
Response: Not automatically or in every case. A presumptive case could be triggered by almost any symptom- an elevated temperature, a persistent cough, a rash, generally not feeling well, etc. If such symptoms are exhibited or experienced by someone in the building, the individual will be immediately isolated and/or sent home with follow-up instructions. Parents will be informed only if the isolated individual was in contact with their child.

Q6. What kind of screening are you going to do? Is it safe in a long run if we do it every day? (1:19pm, Hailu)

Response: Our screening protocols are all designed to reduce the likelihood that someone will introduce and/or spread the virus inside CentroNia. Non-touch thermometers will be used to take children’s temperatures at least 3 times during the day, at drop off parents will be asked a few COVID-19 related questions (responses will be recorded), all employees must take temperatures, answer specific questions, and record responses. Multiple and pre-designated entrances and exits have been assigned. There are disinfecting stations at each entrance. Masks are required of all adults entering our buildings. Social distancing will be enforced outside and inside the buildings.

Q7. Currently am not working-staying home. Is it ok to keep my child home until the situation gets better? (1:21pm, Selamawit Tesfamariam)

Response: Yes, at least while the general stay-at-home orders are still in effect.

Q8. Are temperatures be accurate immediately following naps? (1:21pm, Cait)

Response: Yes. We are following health department guidance on all health and safety protocols.

Q9. Could you speak more about whether and how smaller groupings of children will be organized? what instruction will teachers give children on touching, hand washing, etc. (1:22pm, Gabrielle Cosel)

Response: It is mandatory under the COVID-19 guidelines that no classroom or activity has more than 8 children and 2 adults. Teachers are planning in-classroom activities that further breakup the 8 children into even smaller groups, in-classroom social distancing will be practiced where space and activities allow, hand washing will be reinforced throughout the day by the presence of portable sinks inside every classrooms (will also minimize use of communal bathrooms).

Q10. Are you considering if all staff and eventually children and families be required to be tested for covid or antibodies? (1:25pm, Brittney Rocourt)
Response: Not at this time. Once free testing becomes available for all, of course we’ll have to look at and consider what is in the best interest of our children and staff.

Q11. I logged in a little late - If we’re at the point of taking about drop off and pick up...how will that process work? Who will take our child from the door into the room? Thanks! (1:27pm, Jonathan Parker

Response: We’re making every effort to have children received by one of their pre-COVID teachers. Since most classes had 3 teachers, and can now only have 2, the 3rd teacher will take the child to the classroom.

Q12. I think I heard there was a screening question about anyone in the household traveling. What are the specifics? Will quarantine be required if kids/families who engaged in any kind of travel or just specific kind of travel (for example, domestic travel by car vs. domestic travel by plane vs. international travel) (1:29pm, Farah Ahmad)

Response: We have gotten clarification on this from the DC Department of Health. The question is specifically related to travel BY PLANE within the last 14 days.

Q13. When will the Takoma Park location be reopening? (1:29pm, Stephanie)

Response: When the State of MD and Montgomery County (we need permission from both) give the ok for child care providers to reopen to serve more than essential workers. Right now we are planning as if we can re-open our MD site within the next 2 weeks.

Q14. During drop off, I usually stick around for a few minutes before I leave my child. I know now things are different. I would like to hear more about drop off. Do parents just drop off and leave? Especially now since the children have not been in this environment for several months. (1:29pm, Iashira De la Rosa)

Response: See Q11. Yes, the procedure will be that parents will drop off and leave. Otherwise we’d have to let all parents enter, have someone outside each classroom to control how long a parent stays, insure social distancing, record what surfaces are touched, that there is no congregating in the halls, etc. Just too much to handle under these conditions...

Q15. For example can we walk them in the classroom and then leave instead of building door? (1:30pm, Iashira De La Rosa)

Response: See Q14. No- Walking them to the classroom would require someone ensuring parents don’t enter the classrooms. Teachers would be in the position of having to physically engage with a parent (as
opposed to virtual parent-teacher conversations) while simultaneously having to stay focused on all the other children.

Q16.  Hi, my name is Yohannes. I am sorry. I might have missed this, but I need know that (it) is mandatory to bring the kids on May 8th? What if I need to keep him at home like about 15 days? (1:33pm, Yohannes)

Response: No. It is not mandatory to being your child starting June 8th. Make sure though to let the Admission’s Office know when you do plan to have your child return so we can plan for his/her return.

Q17.  How long will the 3pm closure last? (1:40pm, via email)

Response: Our modified schedule for all sites will be 7:30am to 3:30pm. We’re planning for the modified schedule to be in effect through the summer but we’ll be tracking its impact and, if possible, will make adjustments to the schedule as indicated. The schedule will reflect the status of COVID-19 in our region and the guidance of our health and licensing agencies.

Q18.  Will the children also be wearing masks? (1:41pm, Michelle)

Response: Our practice will be that children under the age of 3 will not wear masks. A parent requesting their under 3 child wear a mask will be required to make a written request, provide a doctor’s note that the child has no medical condition that could be heighten by the wearing of a mask, and the parent provides the masks. Children over the age of 3 can wear masks if requested by a parent, the parent provides the masks, and the child has no known medical condition.

Q19.  Can you talk about drop off and pick up at Columbia Rd: It’s a very busy and high traffic street, so are parents able to pull in through the alley or any other options? (1:43pm, Steve Swern)

Response: There is no easy solution to our well-established parking challenges. While the alley continues to be a “no-parking” zone, we’ve approached DC Department of Transportation about suspending this restriction and DC Metro Police about not enforcing it for the time being (no responses to date).

Q20.  Maybe we’ll get to this later in the presentation. Is CentroNia considering phased in options so that the school is not at full occupancy immediately, or offering parents part-time and full-time admission options during this time? (1:44pm, Brittney Rocourt)

Response: We are anticipating an initial reopening occupancy of approximately 40-50% at all our sites. We are not considering part-time care as it would create staffing and planning challenges on top of everything else we are doing.
Q21.  (a) Will CentroNia be providing PPE for children upon arrival just as they will be providing it to employees?  Response: No. See Q18. Employees will be given 2 washable masks which they will be responsible for having with them at all times, disposable gloves, and disposable slip-on covers.

(b) We were charged for the last two weeks of March, when will we receive a refund for these weeks of no service due to COVID 19? Response: There will be no refunds. Instead, full tuition parents were given 50% credit for their March payment.

(c) Why are we being charged for services not rendered in the month of May? When will this charge be removed from our billing? Response: Full tuition parents should direct all billing questions to our Admissions Office. Briefly though, the partial charge for full tuition slots throughout the last few months was a recognition of parents’ changed circumstances, a way to reserve your slot and help cover the cost of keeping CentroNia ready to re-open.

(d) Why are daycares being opened when it is still deemed unsafe for older children to participate in summer day camps and schools? Response: Summer day camps and public schools face different re-opening challenges, especially related to the limit of 10 people per classroom/activity, and the need for social distancing.

(e) How will social distancing be enforced within the classroom? Response: CentroNia is fortunate to have good sized classrooms to accommodate social distancing. Teachers have planned activities for groups of 3-4, and are being creative in helping children practice social distancing- for example, hoolahoops will be used to designate the play area of each child (when nor engage n small group activities.

(f) Without sufficient testing, a temperature reading may not be able to pick up a child who is infected and perhaps asymptomatic. How are you mitigating against this? Response: All we can do is follow the guidance of health care experts, and note that our teachers are not medical personnel. The fact that a child does not have a temperature doesn’t mean that teachers are not going to be observing the children for any signs that seem out of the ordinary. They did this pre-COVID, and will continue to do so post-COVID.

(g) With a reduction of hours provided for daycare service, will there be also a reduction in tuition costs due to a lessening of services provided? Response: No. Our full tuition rates are already less than the actual cost for child care in this region. With the added costs of COVID-19 mitigation steps, the discounts in place, the increases in operating costs and the reduction in overall revenues, we simply can’t provide further cuts to our tuition fee at this time. We are however looking into creating a parent fund to help parents with short term needs.
Q22. What will happen if we don’t send the children until we feel sure we are safe? (1:45pm, Matos)

Response: Until further notice, children enrolled before the closing of our centers continue to be officially enrolled. The attendance requirements have been temporarily waived. Parents who decide to keep their children at-home due to the COVID-19 situation should contact the Lisa Rivera, Admissions Office (lrivera@centronia.org) to notify us and discuss their individual contracts.

Q23. Also, will parents still be able to volunteer or not until the moment? (1:45pm, Michelle)

Response: Not at this time due to the strict limit of 8 children and 2 adults in a classroom.

Q24. Per the overview document provided for this meeting children will be allowed to play on the center’s playground. Can a parent object and not let their child play on these playgrounds? (1:45pm, Marisol Balaban)

Response: No. In such an instance, the child should be kept at home. In order to separate a child while his/her class is at the playground would require that another teacher be available to care for the child. Although we will have “floater” teachers available they will be covering for teachers on breaks, and engaged in other tasks related to insuring the health and safety of all our children.

Q25. For the Takoma Park location, is the before and after care program effected? If so, how? (1:46pm, Stephanie)

Response: There are a lot of programs and funding related questions related to the Takoma Park site that we are trying to get answered. We’ll get the answers to you as soon as possible but in the meantime don’t hesitate to contact the MD Director, Rosalba Bonilla-Acosta at racosta@centronia.org.

Q26. Do children have access to play at the playground at this time? (1:48pm, Fikirte)

Response: Yes. At the Columbia Rd site, our rooftop playground is over 7500 square feet. With only one class of 8 children using it at a time, the children will have plenty of space to run and play. We also have the Dance Studio for indoor activities. At our Upshur site, the options are more limited. The children will use the common space in the basement, teachers will still be able to take the children for walks in the immediate neighborhood, and we are tracking access to the park down the street. Our MD site will continue to have use of its playground. We are looking into a spraying machine that can disinfect the playground equipment in-between uses.

Q27. Is she is not attending this year, it’s ok? (1:48pm, Adane Yemame)
Response: See Q16 and Q22.

Q28. (a) Myrna mentioned additional staff having to be hired. My child will be attending this coming year within the DC free pre-k. Is DC helping to fund CentroNia to handle this?

Response: DC has committed to continuing its pre-COVID funding, which includes our participation in the PRE-K for all program. DC foundations have made available some funds to cover costs of COVID-19 mitigation, and some limited Federal dollars are available for COVID-19 responses. The additional staff mentioned by Myrna are really over and above what funders are covering but what we believe is necessary for the elevated level of health and safety we want to provide.

(b) I know our family has limited resources but we want to support advocacy or fundraising to keep the site open for all of us. Is CentroNia ok financially? (1:48pm, Robert Bettman)

Response: Like every child care provider, CentroNia faces financial challenges every day. That was the case pre-COVID and will be so post-COVID. That’s the reality of the child care industry. We are confident that will come out of this COVID-19 crisis with the ability to continue to serve our community.

Q29. Are we talking about Takoma Park location or DC? (1:48pm, Stephanie)

Response: This forum was to let parents know and ask about our planning and preparations for reopening ALL CentroNia sites while we are still facing the COVID-19 threat. Except for reopening dates, all the steps we are taking apply to ALL our sites.

Q30. Does Columbia Rd have temporary parking for drop off and pick up in the alley or off street? We were planning to take public transit but do not feel comfortable any longer and will only drive. (1:50pm, Steve Swern)

Response: See Q19. There is special parking for CentroNia parents for drop-off and pick-up immediately in front of 1420 Columbia Rd. And other off-street parking on the rest of Columbia Rd is generally available as long as you follow the signs.

Q31. For some of the toddler and infant rooms were split in half. Are these rooms now only going to house 1 classroom? (1:55pm, Danielle and Jarrett Jacobs)

Response: Mostly Yes. Only if we can install a barrier (more than just furniture) that meets the guidelines mandated by DC and MD governments (barrier must be at least 7 feet, no gap at floor level, and allow for 6 feet distance from where the children are located) can a split room continue to function as 2 classrooms. Right now we have only one split room that will continue to operate 2 classrooms.
Q32. Repeat of Question 20. See above.

Q33. What is your plan to limit spread of germs from infants? Everything is in their mouths. Realistically how is this going to be mitigated?

Response: Infants and toddlers do present special challenges and we’re taking extra mitigating steps. These include the following: (a) teachers will select 3 toys every day for the exclusive use of each child: (b) cribs will be spaced at least 6 feet apart (as opposed to the standard 3 ft), as space permits; (3) in addition to teachers wearing masks and using disposal gloves, they will wear disposal and smocks (4) an additional day janitor has been hired to ensure that trash cans are emptied a minimum of twice daily; (5) teachers must arrive at least ½ hour before children arrive and stay after children leave in order to wipe down all surfaces, books and toys. Floors and carpeting will be cleaned daily, and deep cleanings as necessary.

Q34. I am most certainly uncomfortable dropping off my daughter off with someone that she isn’t comfortable with yet due to the time out. I understand precautions due to COVID but I don’t feel comfortable dropping off outside and just leaving not forming part of the transition. I will definitely try to consider it. Thanks. (1:56pm, Iashira De La Rosa)

Response: See Q11 and Q14. We certainly understand that a parent can make the transition process go so much smoother but for now, we simply can’t handle the influx of parents into the center and still be able to ensure the maximum level of health and safety for our children and staff.

Q35. A couple of times folks mentioned drop off and pick up times. Can you go into that in a bit more detail? Are we saying that there’s only a single time of day that we can drop off and pick up our son? (1:57pm, Jonathan Parker)

Response: All parents will be given an assigned time for drop off. Clearly, a few minutes difference won’t be consequential but dropping off your child whenever you want to is not an option right now. Assigned times is the only we can plan for and control the flow of traffic outside and inside the buildings. There will be more flexibility on pick-ups as long as a parents calls before arriving so that the child can be brought from the classroom to the front entrance.

Q36. Can we keep our children until we feel safe to send them? If we do so, what will be the consequences? (1:58pm, Yoel, also asked by Danielle and Jarrett Jacobs and Britney Rocour)

Response: See Q16 and Q22. Until further notice, yes. The Admissions Office is communicating with all parents in order to know parents specific future plans.
Q37. Will these slides be available anywhere else for future reference? (2:09Pm, Ismael)

Response: Yes. They will be posted on the parent link on the CentroNia web site.

Q38. Will a recording of this webinar be available later? (Thanks for everything you are doing to try to reopen our classrooms. This is a challenging time for everyone, and I appreciate these efforts) (2:09pm, Harlan Yu)

Response: The link to the recording is on available on the GoToMeetings platform. To access them, please click your forum preference below:

6/1/20 Parent Forum - English
6/1/20 Parent Forum - Spanish

Q39. How will children at Upshur get movement? (2:11pm, Tiffany Longman and Iashira De La Rosa)


Q40. Really appreciate that you are taking the time to do this session, and putting in all these precaution at CentroNia. It’d be great to know when these remaining questions will be answered that keep getting tabled for later: If not on this call? (2:12pm, Brittney Rocourt)

Response: Hopefully, with this document and your access to all of us here at CentroNia, all your questions will be or have been answered.

Q41. Glad to read the front playground will not be utilized. I’ve never been to the rooftop playground. How will you provide a safe and clean environment with such a large school?

Response: See Q26 regarding playground. The more general question of how to provide a safe and clean environment for our large facilities is to enforce our very detailed protocols. Our COVID-19 Facilities Protocol is over 60 pages. For example, we’ve cancelled all evening activities so that once the center is cleaned immediately after the children and staff are gone, no one enters the buildings until the next morning. But we will need everyone’s cooperation if we are to maximize the health and safety of all our children and staff. Parents have to be our partners at every step.

Q42. What might trigger a full closure of a particular location? One case of covid? Two? (2:15pm, Steve Swern)
Response: We will be required to report (via an Unusual Incident Report) to both our DC and MD licensing monitors whenever a COVID-19 action is taken or incident occurs that directly involves a child or his/her family. It’s clear that a positive test would close down a classroom for investigation/tracing. It’s also assumed that positive tests in more than one classroom could trigger the closing of the building affected. In between these two scenarios, it’s hard to know what would trigger a closure. What we do expect are unannounced monitoring visits to make sure we are in compliance with all the COVID-19 guidelines.

Q43. Also will be taking cups, Clorox wipes, and tissues. (2:16pm, Michelle)

Response: Thank you for this. All CentroNia sites will however be fully stocked with PPE materials, cleaning and disinfectants products, and screening supplies.

Q44. Also how sure are you that staff will keep areas clean and safe for the kids when you haven’t done it before? 2:16pm, Matos)

Response: To meet the new protocols we have scheduled additional daytime janitorial staff and contracted for additional evening and weekend cleaning services.

Q45. There were a few questions about tuition that were put aside for the end of the meeting, not sure how long this meeting is but I would like to hear about this as well before the meeting ends. Thanks. (2:20pm, Iashira De La Rosa)

Response: See Q21 (b)(c)(g). I would encourage you to be in direct contact with The Admissions Office with regards to your specific questions/concerns.

Q46. Are all the classes and toys going to be disinfected every day? (2:20pm, Sita)

Response: Yes. All classes will be cleaned every evening. Teachers will disinfected all toys before leaving for the day. Teachers will arrive by 7am to ensure their classrooms are ready to receive children. Classrooms will be visited in the mornings and afternoons by janitorial staff for trash removal, and any needed wiping down of surfaces requested. Throughout the day, hallways, bathrooms and other common areas will be regularly disinfected so as not to inadvertently transfer any germs from those areas into a classroom.

Q47. Sanitizing the rooftop playground between classroom use should be mandatory...just as toys, surfaces etc are being sanitized throughout the day, please. (2:21pm, Marisol Balaban)
Response: Agreed. We are looking into a spraying machine that can disinfect the playground equipment in-between uses.

Q48. Can OSSE provide special guidance for families that have parents with serious risk factor pre-existing conditions at home? I know of at least one parent in our child’s room for whom a household positive is probably very serious situation. Nobody wants to get but risk is not the same for all homes (2:23pm, Robert Bettman)

Response: Will check with OSSE. Their guidance to-date on this issue has been fairly general.

Q49. Are staff using medical masks or cloth masks? (2:23pm, Tiffany Longman)

Response: Staff is using double-layered, washable cloth masks.

Q50. By bringing our children to your centers and allowing them to play on the playground we are now exposing them from our personal families to 9 new additional people. With the playground, they are being exposed to any child and adult that has used it all day. Making their expose much much larger. DC Parks and Recs have not opened playgrounds. (2:24pm, Marisol Balaban)

Response: See Q24 and Q26.

Q51. What do you think about disinfecting kid shoes in addition to checking COVID? Because all kids will come (from) different places and wore them outside the daycare. (2:28pm, Tsegawit Milky)

Response: It’s being discussed. Disinfecting just the children’s shoes though ignores the fact that staff and others are entering the building and classrooms throughout a given day. We’ve discussed several options related to both children and staff shoes. Staff has been asked to bring and plan to leave a pair of shoes that would be used exclusively in the building.

Q52. For drop off at 7:30, no more emergency minutes? (2:28pm, Kalkidan Hagos)

Response: See Q35.

Q53. Was thinking re: pre-existing that DC pays for special rooms for some children in some situations. (2:31pm, Robert Bettman)

Response: OSSE and DCPS have some specific requirements for accommodating children with special needs but don’t believe there’s a separate classroom accommodation required of child care centers. And it’s not clear if COVID-19 would apply. Will follow-up with OSSE for clarification.
Q54: I’m sorry but I didn’t expect this forum to be so long, could we please address some questions surrounding specifically Takoma Park location? (2:31pm, Stephanie)

Response: Almost everything being discussed is relevant to our Takoma Park site except that it is NOT opening on June 8th. The hope is that MD state and Montgomery County authorities will approve our re-opening (to serve our families enrolled before closing) within the next 2-3 weeks. If approval is received sooner, we will be ready to open.

Q55. Do you have proof (in reference to Q53)? (2:31pm, Matos)

Response: We looking into this with OSSE.

Q56. Will Takoma Park’s before and after program still be running at the same drop off and pick up times? (2:32pm, Stephanie)

Response: When it re-opens, the Takoma Park site will operate at the same modified schedule as our other sites. Contact MD Director, Rosalba Bonilla-Acosta if you have specific questions on the before and after program.

Q57. When is Takoma Park location expected to open? (2:32pm, Stephanie)

Response: See Q54.

Q58. Did OSSE really said that children can’t go back because of their health? (2:33pm, Matos)

Response: As of May 25, DC Health recommends that “children and staff at high risk for experiencing severe illness due to COVID-19 must be cleared by their medical provider before participating in child care activities”. This comes from the DC Health: Phase 1 guidance for Child Care Facilities, and as Myrna mentioned, we will make it available to all families.

Q59. Could there be a separate forum for Maryland families when that time comes, only because as we know new information is consistently developing surrounding COVID-19? What could apply now, may change later. (2:23pm, Stephanie)

Response: Agreed. Will make sure it happens once we know the official reopening date.

Q60. Would it be before 3pm to cover the question about families that may want to delay their child starting back until later in the summer? (2:27pm, Gabrielle Cosel)
Response: See Q7, Q16 and Q22. Also, feel free to check in with Admissions Office with any specific questions.

Q61. What are we supposed to bring on Monday? (2:48pm. By mobile phone)

Response: Parents are to receive instructions from their child teachers.

Q62. Let’s say we start and feel unsafe all of a sudden and stop coming. Will our spot be still there? (2:52pm, Kalidan Hagos)

Response: See Q7, Q16, and Q22. If a child returns and stops coming (for whatever reason), we would expect the parent to contact the Admissions Office immediately. If the reason is COVID-19 related, Admissions will work with the family to protect their slot to the extent possible.