



Tip Sheet: Reducing COVID-19 Risks for Learning Pods
REVISED September 9, 2020

This Tip Sheet was developed by the San Francisco Department of Public Health for use by participants of Learning Pods and will be posted at www.sfdcp.org. This Tip Sheet may change as information is updated.

AUDIENCE: Parents and caregivers considering or participating in Learning Pods.

BACKGROUND: The San Francisco Department of Public Health (SFDPH) cares about you and we want you to take care of yourself, your family, and your community amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Learning Pods, also known as "pandemic pods," "learning cohorts" or "micro-schools" refer to in-person gatherings of children or youth from different households with one or more adult teachers, tutors, parents or caregivers for the purpose of receiving or facilitating educational instruction.

The SFDPH recognizes that parents and caregivers are trying their best during this difficult time and that some are creating Learning Pods for their children. At the same time, San Francisco is experiencing an increase of local transmission of COVID-19 and we need your help to keep the community safe. Review current transmission data at: San Francisco COVID-19 Data Tracker, data.sfgov.org

Small outdoor gatherings are acceptable while maintaining 6 feet social distancing and face coverings. Indoor gatherings with people outside of your household have a much higher risk of COVID-19 transmission to you and your family. See more details at www.sfdph.org/directives. Nannies, babysitters, and tutors who provide indoor services to households should maintain face covering at all times and social distancing as much as possible.

This tip sheet gives you information and resources to help you assess the risks of joining a Learning Pod and provides guidance on reducing risks if you choose to participate.

Risk of social interactions with people outside your household:

Table with 5 rows and 5 columns. Columns: Outside or Inside?, Outside, ONE OR NONE: within 6 feet and/or with face covering off, Inside, ONE OR NONE: within 6 feet and/or with face covering off. Rows: 6 foot distance and/or face covering?, Is this lower risk?, Comments.

Lower Risk

Higher Risk





## Important Considerations

Indoor gatherings with people outside your household are **much** riskier than outdoor gatherings.

Person-to-person transmission via respiratory droplets in indoor, crowded, stuffy (poorly ventilated) settings with people from separate households is contributing to the current increase in community transmission. One of the risks of Learning Pods is that people often overlook that non-family members of the pod are potential sources of infection. As a result, participants of Learning Pods and their families may become less diligent with their face coverings or forget to maintain 6 foot social distancing. Break times, meal times, and pick-up and drop-off times are periods of increased risk due to social mingling.

## Tips for Reducing Risk

If you decide to participate in a Learning Pod there are steps you can take to reduce the risk of COVID-19 transmission in your pod and in your community. Parents and caregivers should also review and follow SFPDH guidance on “Out of School Time Programs” at <http://sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare>.

### Members of the Learning Pod should recognize the symptoms of COVID-19

- Families should review SFPDH guidance on [symptom screening \(including for children\)](#), [testing](#) information, and [isolation and quarantine](#) instructions. Screening for symptoms can help to reduce the risk of infection.
- Participants within a Learning Pod should plan for when a student or adult develops symptoms, or tests positive for COVID-19 and may need to be close.
- Preliminary research suggests that while younger children are less likely to have severe disease from COVID-19, older children and teenagers may have disease severity more similar to adults.

### Minimize the risk of adult-to-adult transmission

Reducing the number of adults within the Learning Pod minimizes the risk to the pod and the community.

- Keeping adults and students in the same group lowers their exposure risk by decreasing the number of people they come into contact with each day.
- Rotating groups of adults within a pod, such as having multiple parents take turns teaching, is riskier than having a less adults interact.

### Maintain a stable group of participants in your Learning Pod

- Limit the number of outside visitors to maintain the stable pod and avoid introducing COVID-19 into the pod.
- Participation in multiple, separate Learning Pods or other child or youth programs, will increase the risk of transmission.

### Pick an appropriate location for your Learning Pod

Outdoor spaces are much lower risk. If your Learning Pod must gather indoors, make sure it is in a well-ventilated area, preferably with open windows and/or doors if it is safe to do so. Air movement helps to



“dilute” potentially infectious respiratory particles in the air. Portable air cleaners may be considered, but users should ensure the devices are sized and positioned appropriately for the specific space. Windowless “stuffy” rooms, such as basements, should be avoided.

- Evaluate the physical setting of the Learning Pod to ensure that social distancing of 6 feet can occur. Avoid crowding in small spaces, such as bathrooms, kitchens, hallways.
- Physically separate the Learning Pod gathering as much as possible from others in the household, especially those from vulnerable groups. Such individuals should consider leaving the indoor setting entirely until the gathering has ended. See <https://sfcdcp.org/vulnerable>.

### Face coverings and social distancing

- As it is not always feasible to maintain social distancing, especially for younger children, prioritize maintaining 6 feet distancing between adults, and between adults and children.
- All adults and children in the third grade and above must wear face masks or cloth face coverings over their both their nose and mouth at all times. This includes family members and caregivers dropping-off or picking-up children.
- Children between two years old and second grade) are strongly encouraged to wear face coverings.
- Face shields, worn in addition to face coverings, and clear plastic barriers may help to reduce the risk of droplet transmission between individuals. Face shield and clear plastic barriers should not be used in place of face coverings.

### Minimize risk of certain activities

- Eating together is especially high risk for COVID-19 transmission because people must remove their masks to eat and drink. Eating outdoors, and with social distancing can help to reduce this risk. To the extent possible, youth and adults should put their masks back on whenever they are not actively eating or drinking (especially when they are talking during a meal) to reduce the risk.
- Avoid group singing and using wind instruments. These activities are higher risk for COVID-19 transmission due to the larger numbers of respiratory droplets produced.
- Exercising is an area of higher risk for transmission due to the potential for close contact and increased breathing. For guidance on sports, please see Youth Sports Section of “*Preliminary Guidance for Out of School Time Programs*,” at <https://sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare>.
- You can minimize the risk associated with transportation to the Learning Pod location by choosing to walk, bike, or drive in a single car. If using public transit, maintain 6 feet of distance from others as much as you can, keep your face covering on, and wash your hands or use hand sanitizer as soon as possible when you arrive at the Learning Pod. Avoid carpooling with those from outside the Learning Pod.

### Sanitation and cleaning

- All members of the Learning Pod should wash or sanitize hands regularly with soap or alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



- Avoid sharing electronic devices, sports equipment, clothing, books, games, art supplies, manipulatives, learning aids, and other high-touch materials when feasible.
- Clean and disinfect shared supplies and equipment. Typical household disinfectants can be used to kill coronavirus on high touch surfaces such as door knobs, bathroom surfaces, etc.
- For more information on cleaning: <http://sfcdcp.org/covidcleaning>

## What if somebody in the Learning Pod has symptoms or tests positive for COVID-19?

If somebody develops any symptoms of illness while participating in the Learning Pod, they should go home, call their healthcare provider, get tested and isolate according to the instructions at <https://www.sfcdcp.org/i&q>.

Parents should review the documents “COVID-19 Health Checks at Programs for Children and Youth” and “For Parents and Guardians: COVID-19 Health Checks for Children and Youth/ If You Child Has Symptoms” at <https://sfcdcp.org/covidschoolschildcare>.

If somebody tests positive for COVID-19, then their “close contacts” are required to quarantine for 14 days. A “close contact” is anybody who spent more than 15 minutes within 6 feet of the positive case. **It is very possible that the entire Learning Pod will need to quarantine for 14 days if someone in the Learning Pod tests positive.**

See [Guidance for Isolation & Quarantine](https://www.sfcdcp.org/i&q) at <https://www.sfcdcp.org/i&q>. Please work collaboratively with SFDPH as we are focused on limiting the spread of COVID-19.

Consider maintaining a log of participants and visitors to your Learning Pod to help with contact tracing if someone tests positive for COVID-19

## Resources

Useful COVID-19 resources to keep checking:

- [San Francisco Department of Public Health \(SFDPH\) COVID-19 Guidance: www.sfcdcp.org/covid19](https://www.sfcdcp.org/covid19)
- [City and County of San Francisco COVID-19 Information: sf.gov/covid](https://sf.gov/covid)

The San Francisco Department of Public Health thanks you for your help in keeping yourself, your family, and your community safe amid the COVID-19 crisis.