



TOTH
MONTESSORI
NAVY YARD, WASHINGTON, DC



August 28, 2020

Dear ToTH Parents,

This letter is to address our community's readiness to begin a more thorough discussion regarding actions you will take outside of school to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure. Because of the inherent risk that comes with congregate child care settings, we recognize the stress that comes with sending your child back to school during a pandemic.

Starting on August 31, each member of our staff will become a frontline worker during this pandemic. Every time a member of our team wipes a nose, changes a diaper, or rubs your child's back to help her rest, our staff will also be taking a risk. Their jobs were already demanding before the pandemic; now they need to juggle countless new protocols, from donning a smock, booties and gloves if entering a different room, to sanitizing works, surfaces and bathroom spaces throughout their day, to making all of that effort disappear so that the children can be safer and also feel encouraged and stimulated as they move inside their classes and take neighborhood walks. While our board, administration and staff focuses on the ToTH environment and activities at school, we ask our parents to focus on home and social environments and activities outside of school. This is a collective effort. There is one more conversation that is an important next step in our return to school and that is to know that our entire parent community is taking appropriate precautions *outside of ToTH*.

ToTH will play an important role in encouraging parents to conduct respectful, trusting and ongoing conversations with one another. In addition to having set up class list serves and sharing class rosters to facilitate each classroom's communications, our team is speaking one on one with parents who have volunteered to initiate and guide this conversation in each class cohort. Some Zoom calls are already scheduled. We urge you each to share your perspectives and contribute to compromise and consensus where you can on those calls. We note that each of you has agreed to adhere to DC mandates around masking, social distancing and travel, and in our risk assessment survey, parents widely supported adhering to "on your honor" agreements for actions you can all take outside of ToTH to try to reduce the risk of COVID-19 exposure in the ToTH community that could disrupt everyone's access to school.

Below are a few ideas to help feed your discussions together and which you may choose to use or adjust as needed to build consensus in your classroom community around outside-of-ToTH risk management. We are not in a position to endorse parents' choices but we do urge each group to give space to each end of the spectrum to be heard without judgment, and bring ideas and a desire to reach consensus to your discussions, which we hope and expect will be ongoing. None of us is going to get 100% comfort with the level of risk nor with the level of loss of normalcy we experience during this pandemic. But we

count ourselves lucky to be able to welcome back this community to our school, and to protect it together.

In order to allow Natalie and Stephanie to continue to keep their focus on the classroom environments and the children and teachers in the coming days and weeks, we invite any parents who would like to raise any questions or concerns or ideas on how the ToTH community can feel safer outside of ToTH to reach out to Anya (anya@toddlersonthehill.org), who has been by Natalie and Stephanie's side throughout the reopening process. We thank you for your trust, for your patience, and for bringing an open heart to every conversation.

In community,

Anya Landau French, *Co-founder and Board Chair, Finance Director*

Natalie Baginski, *Head of School*

Stephanie Sarvana, *Administrative Director and COVID-19 Point of Contact*

Ideas for Feeding the conversation for outside-of-ToTH activities

Playdates and pods

- The 8 children in each ToTH class pod could primarily or exclusively have playdates with one another.
- When playdates with children outside of ToTH *are necessary* for the wellbeing and mental health of a given ToTH family and child, the ToTH family first asks questions of the non-ToTH contacts about their recent activities in order to assess the additional risk.
- Conduct temperature checks before play dates.
- Children with any symptoms of illness, even a runny nose, do not attend playdates.
- Conduct playdates outside when possible or in a space that has been sanitized and disinfected. Birthday parties and other celebrations consist of only ToTH class families and limited additional contacts whose recent activity level is known.
- When a ToTH child is enrolled in an outside program for socialization and exercise, only outdoor activities with strict distancing are considered. Parents actively monitor adherence to guidelines.
- If a ToTH family needs to share a nanny or participate in a learning pod for another child, that family will first inquire as to the nanny or other family's recent and ongoing activities, and endeavor to set ground rules with those non-ToTH contacts.

Date Nights, Shopping and Out on the Town

- Parents choose to set up a ToTH baby-sitting co-op to avoid using outside babysitters.
- Choose online shopping whenever possible to stay away from stores, malls and dressing rooms.
- When enjoying meals and beverages outside of the home, families will only eat and drink in restaurants that offer outside seating.
- Avoid gatherings of ten people or more and only attend small gatherings where social distancing and other safety measures such as masks and ventilation or outdoor space are upheld.

Self Care, Fitness and Fun

- Parents avoid salons and spas as much as possible.

- Parents embrace outdoor and solo exercise such as yoga, running, bike riding, and rollerblading in lieu of visiting a gym or engaging in group sports such as basketball and soccer, or only play such group sports outdoors.
- When a massage is necessary for physical or mental health, a practitioner will be invited into the home and wear a mask during treatment.

Additional Resources:

[Getting kids involved in activities again - weighing risk vs. benefits](#)

[2-3 minute breathing fix for stress when what you REALLY want is a 90 minute massage...](#)

[Normalize mask wearing at home to help us normalize mask wearing at school](#)