

COVID-19 Risk Management Protocols for U.S. Based World Learning Youth Programs

World Learning has implemented the following health and safety protocols for 2022 programs with the goal of reducing COVID-19 infection and the spread of the virus from one location to another.

To achieve this goal, World Learning adheres to both home country entry regulations and Centers for Disease Control (CDC) regulations. If home country entry regulations are more relaxed than CDC regulations, World Learning defers to CDC regulations.

PROGRAM UPDATES

Responding to the dynamic risk horizon caused by the COVID-19 virus, and out of an abundance of caution, World Learning continues to evaluate and amend many program elements to mitigate risk. These include:

1. Homestays

Homestays have always been an integral part of the World Learning Youth Programs. With the advent of COVID-19, homestays may present an elevated risk of exposure to both participants and host families in some settings. As a result, World Learning has suspended homestays for programs in the United States through August 2022.

2. Vaccinations

As part of our commitment to ensuring the health, safety and well-being of participants, staff, and host communities, **World Learning requires participants to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the start of their program.** [According to the Centers for Disease Control](#), people are considered fully vaccinated two weeks after their second dose in a two-dose series (e.g. Moderna or Pfizer) and two weeks after a single-dose vaccine (e.g. Johnson & Johnson).

Given the increase of COVID variants resulting in changes to entry requirements from countries around the world, and varying definitions of how countries define “fully vaccinated,” **World Learning is strongly recommending that all participants receive a COVID-19 booster shot** prior to the start of the program. Data from clinical trials has shown that a booster shot can increase the immune response and help prevent COVID-19 symptoms. Additional information about booster shots can be found on the [Center for Disease Control’s website](#).

World Learning understands that there are legitimate reasons why participants may not be vaccinated against COVID-19. We provide the opportunity to petition for an exemption to our vaccination requirement on the grounds of medical reasons, sincerely held religious beliefs, or vaccine unavailability. Petitions will be reviewed by World Learning’s Risk Assessment Committee as long as they do not present undue hardship and/or pose a direct threat to the health and safety of the requesting participant or to other members of our programs.

For travel into the United States, the CDC will accept vaccines that are approved or authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) as well as vaccines listed for Emergency Use (EUL) by the World Health Organization (WHO).

World Learning does require that all Group Leaders be fully vaccinated against COVID-19.

3. Masks

The CDC recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, participants, and visitors to schools, regardless of vaccination status. Consistent with this recommendation, and to provide maximum protection from COVID-19 and all variants, and prevent possible spread to others, **World Learning requires that all participants wear a mask in public indoor settings and anywhere else required by local laws, regulations, and guidance.**

When choosing a mask, look at how well it fits. (See CDC [guidelines](#) on masks.)

Wear cloth masks with

- A proper fit over your nose, mouth, and chin to prevent leaks
- Multiple layers of tightly woven, breathable fabric
- Nose wire
- Fabric that blocks light when held up to bright light source

Do NOT wear cloth masks with

- Gaps around the sides of the face or nose
- Exhalation valves, vents, or other openings (see example)
- Single-layer fabric or those made of thin fabric that don't block light
- Wet or dirty material

4. Tests & Quarantine

Before Travel to the United States

Per U.S. Government Policy, in order to enter the U.S. both unvaccinated and vaccinated participants must present a negative viral COVID-19 test conducted **no more than 1 day prior to departure** (the first leg of one's flight). Two types of viral tests can be used: nucleic acid amplification tests (NAATs) and antigen tests. The "1 day" timeframe is defined by days instead of hours to provide more flexibility to the traveler.

Upon Arrival to the United States

- **Both unvaccinated & vaccinated** participants must obtain a viral PCR test 3-5 days after arrival. See *COVID Response Protocol* section below for protocols should this test produce a positive result.

Before Departure to Home Country

- **Unvaccinated** participants must take a viral PCR test 1 – 3 days prior to departure, or in some cases prior to arrival (based on the specific requirements of the home country). Participants who test negative should present the test result to airport officials. Participants who test positive may not travel.
- **Vaccinated** participants do not need to obtain a viral PCR test prior to departure (unless required by the home country or when World Learning deems it necessary).

5. Transportation

World Learning supports CDC recommendations to mitigate COVID-19 risk in transportation settings, to include: a) Wear masks, maintain physical distance, avoid touching surfaces, and practice hand hygiene; b) Refrain from eating or drinking; c) With regards to the driver, maintain physical distance and request ventilation improvements as needed.

COVID RESPONSE PROTOCOL

Quarantine guidelines should be followed when an individual may have been exposed to the virus and may or may not have been infected.

Isolation guidelines should be followed when an individual is sick or when that person has been infected with the virus, even if they are non-symptomatic.

I. Exposure

a. **Who does not need to quarantine.** Participants who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 do not need to quarantine if they have received all recommended vaccine doses, including boosters (or have tested positive for COVID-19 through a viral test within the previous 90 days and subsequently recovered and remain non-symptomatic). However, participants should wear a well-fitting mask around others for 10 days from the “date of last close contact” (the date of last close contact is considered day 0) and should get tested at least five days after the date of last close contact. In turn, if participants test positive or develop COVID-19 symptoms, they should follow the recommendations in the Isolation section below.

b. **Who should quarantine.** Participants who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should quarantine if they are in one of the following groups:

- Have completed the primary series of recommended vaccine but have not received a recommended booster shot.
- Have received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine (completing the primary series for J&J vaccines) over two months ago but have not received a recommended booster shot.
- Are unvaccinated or have not completed a primary vaccine series.

c. **What to do for quarantine.** Stay inside housing accommodations and away from other people for at least five full days (day 0 through day 5) after the date of last close contact. The date of last close contact is considered day 0. Participants should also:

- Wear a well-fitting mask when around others in housing accommodations.
- For 10 days after the date of last close contact watch for fever (100.4 degrees F or greater) and [other COVID-19 symptoms](#).
- If symptoms develop, get tested immediately and isolate (see below) until test results are returned. If the test result is positive, continue to follow isolation recommendations. If negative, participants can leave housing accommodations, but should continue masking when around others at home and in public until 10 days after the date of last close contact.
- If symptoms do not develop, get tested at least five days after the date of last close contact.

2. Positive Test or Symptomatic

If a person tests positive and/or is experiencing symptoms consistent with COVID-19, regardless of their vaccination status, World Learning follows these CDC guidelines:

a. **Isolate.** Isolation is used to separate people infected with COVID-19 from those who are not infected. Isolation means staying in housing accommodations in a specific room and separating from other people for at least five full days (day 0 is the first day of symptoms or the date of the positive viral test for non-symptomatic individuals).

Those in isolation should:

- Monitor their symptoms. If participants have an [emergency warning sign](#), they should seek emergency medical care immediately.
- Remain in contact with their health care provider
- Stay in a separate room from other participants and use a separate bathroom, if possible.
- Take steps to improve ventilation in the accommodations, if possible.
- Don't share personal household items, like cups, towels, and utensils.
- Wear a well-fitting mask when around other people.
- Take care of themselves (e.g. rest and stay hydrated).

b. **Contact Trace.** An infected person can spread COVID-19 starting 48 hours before the person has any symptoms or tests positive. By letting one's close contacts know they may have been exposed to COVID, they are helping to protect everyone. The CDC defines close contact as someone who was within 6 feet of an infected person for a cumulative total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period starting from two days before illness onset (or, for asymptomatic patients, two days prior to test specimen collection) until the time the patient is isolated.

c. **Ending Isolation.** People who had COVID-19 and **were symptomatic** may be around others after: a) five full days of isolation (day 0 is the first day symptoms appeared), **and** b) 24 hours with no fever (without using fever-reducing medications), **and** c) other symptoms of COVID-19 are improving. These individuals should continue to mask around others at home and in public until day 10 (day 6 through day 10).

- If an individual who was **symptomatic** would like to test prior to ending isolation, the best approach is to use an [antigen test](#) toward the end of day 5. Obtain a test only if fever-free for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medication and other symptoms have improved. If the test result is positive, the person must continue to isolate until day 10. If negative, end isolation, but continue to mask around others at home and in public until day 10.

People who had COVID-19 but were **non-symptomatic**—and continue to have no symptoms—may be around others after five full days of isolation (day 0 is the date the test was conducted). However, these individuals should continue to mask around others at home and in public until day 10 (day 6 through day 10). Furthermore, if symptoms develop after testing positive, the five-day isolation period should start over (day 0 would be the first day of symptoms).

- If an individual who was **non-symptomatic** would like to test prior to ending isolation, the best approach is to use an [antigen test](#) toward the end of day 5. If the test result is positive, continue to isolate until day 10. If negative, end isolation, but continue to mask around others at home and in public until day 10.