

Updated Operations and Experiences for re-opening Louisiana's children's museums 5/18/2020

Louisiana's children's museums have been working together in preparation for safe and healthy re-openings of our trusted institutions. The following guidelines have been created with the hope that children's museums statewide will be included in plans for re-opening during Phase 2.

As a collective whole we have been guided by the Association of Children's Museums and the American Alliance of Museums – the umbrella organizations for our field and all museums around the globe, as well as experts in relevant fields. We have consulted on a local level with health officials, other museum cohorts, state education professionals, and early childhood peers.

While our individual museums vary greatly in interior square footage and outdoor capacity, in programmatic delivery and learning environments, in locations throughout the state of Louisiana, we bring expertise in welcoming the public, making meaningful connections with families with young children, and providing safety and quality in all that we do. As a collective group, we share commitments to the highest safety and operating standards and best practices, even though each of us will operate with slightly different phases and stages of reopening our cultural and educational institutions. We approach this important step with an abundance of caution.

Our commitments include:

- Develop a **phased timeline and coordinated approach** for reopening facilities, resources and experiences based on safety. Interior spaces will be limited to a capacity of 25% of fire marshal regulations. Use of outdoor spaces and controlled groups will be prioritized for activities and demonstrations. Not all amenities from each institution will be available upon initial re-opening, but will be phased in as appropriate
- **Prioritize health and safety** for all guests and staff, through programmatic and operational guidelines
- Establish **clear cleaning protocols**, using CDC guidelines, with designated cleaning periods during closed hours 2 – 3 times each day
- Review and **update our workplace policies** to ensure safety of staff and volunteers, and provide **training for staff** on all aspects of updated procedures and operations
- Restrict contact, capacity, and access through **timed-ticketing and advance registration** for everyone attending the museum, camps, workshops or other programs. Attendance of 25% of capacity will be honored in all schedules
- **Communicate clearly** and frequently with key stakeholders and users

1. Phased timeline and coordinated approach

Not all amenities of each museum will be available upon initial reopening. Resources available for the public – learning experiences, outdoor play, camps, workshops, outreach programs, birthday parties, field trips, trainings – will not *all* be available initially. They will be phased in over the next 12-18 months, in compliance with governmental guidelines, capacity limitations, seasons, school schedules and financial resources.

2. Prioritize health and safety through programmatic protocol

All people entering the museums will be checked in advance or upon arrival to ensure their personal health. Staff members and campers will have a daily temperature check upon arrival, and those booking timed entrance will sign off on “no CDC-identified symptoms” before scheduling admission. Per the state of Louisiana’s guidelines, reinforced by local guidelines, all adults will be required to wear masks and children over the age of 2 will be requested to wear masks. We will employ our collective creativity for masking. Cleaning practices are outlined in the following section.

Children’s museums are community anchors that help support the developmental needs of young children through play-based learning. Our focus and investment is in the social-emotional, cognitive and physical development of children, and our approach is through hands-on learning. This pandemic has caused children’s museums around the world to re-imagine that “hands-on” approach. Through our Association of Children’s Museums, we have been able to learn from Asian children’s museums that are ahead of us on their learning curve and recovery timeline for this pandemic. While we have removed or placed some programs or exhibits on hold, we have adjusted where possible our learning experiences from “hands-on” to “low-touch” or “no-touch.” Cleaning protocol plays a much larger role in our hourly and daily routines in new operating procedures. Demonstrations of *how things work* can be inclusive and engaging while not as physically interactive.

Many of us are lucky enough to have outdoor spaces. Two of us are located in our City Parks, others have surrounding parking lots and green spaces that can be utilized with new creative thought. We will maximize daylight, outdoor settings, nature trails and teaching gardens in new ways.

Camps will be held following the guidelines developed jointly by the departments of Health and Education.

[View the K-12 Summer Camp, Summer School, and Extracurricular Activities Supplemental Guidance.](#)

[View the Child Care Supplemental Guidance.](#)

Birthday parties are also being reimagined, with smaller numbers of guests, shifted locations (to outside when possible), and alterations to providing and serving food safely.

Social distancing can be demonstrated in a variety of imaginative approaches (what does a 6 foot distance look like with an alligator, bubbles, foot prints, spring flowers or other unusual measurements?)

A very simple and common germ-prevention practice is hand washing. All children’s museums will “celebrate” hand washing, possibly awarding stickers for each time a child washes his hands, making that hygiene step more visible with positive reinforcement.

Retail establishments or museum stores will also honor the 25% fire marshal limits when separate spaces and will institute a no-touch shopping approach (which may entail an adults only guideline). Pre-packaged orders may be available for pick up with advance orders.

Food service varies from museum to museum, but generally involves birthday party foods. Shared protocol include:

- There will be no communal food available at birthday parties

- All food must be served by staff assisting birthday (for museums that provide food) or by individual party host (for museums who allow guests to bring food)
- Birthday party hosts must wear a new set of gloves for serving food
- Birthday party host must wash their hands for 20 seconds before and after putting on gloves for food service.
- There will be no shared serving utensils, and plates, napkins and forks should be ordered for one use serving.
- The museum will recommend birthday families celebrate with individual cupcakes instead of shared cakes.
- Bottled water will be served at birthday parties. Communal water pitchers are not allowed.
- In the instance of in-house café, they will follow newly established protocol from the Louisiana Restaurant Association, Louisiana Department of Health and FDA and follow protocol from ServSafe.

3. Clear cleaning protocols for janitorial services and overall cleanliness

Children’s museums have extensive experiences with cleaning protocols but have reevaluated and ramped up efforts from pretend foods to mechanical filtering systems. We recognize that a real and perceived focus on cleanliness is paramount – janitorial service employees will prioritize cleaning high touch areas, such as doors and door handles, stair railings, bathrooms, countertops, etc., throughout each day and after operating hours, also ensuring that all hand soaps and sanitizer stations are filled. Additionally, cleaning will include wiping down all hard surfaces in the exhibit environments including exhibit counters, tops of pony walls, etc. CDC-approved cleaning materials will be used for all purposes. Each staff member in each museum will have important roles in cleaning procedures. A comprehensive cleaning will be conducted in many of our museums three times daily, using the breaks between visits for such purposes. While some, more porous items will be temporarily removed, new cleaning protocol has been established for plastic and wooden toys and loose parts. Smaller quantities will be available to the visiting public, with selections prioritized for sanitation purposes. New sets of “loose parts” can be replaced during each break, allowing the public to use clean materials throughout the day. A typical cleaning schedule may be:

- 9:30 – 11:30 timed play
- *11:30 – 12:30 cleaning*
- 12:30 – 2:30 timed play
- *2:30 - 3:30 cleaning*
- 3:30 – 5:30 timed play
- *5:30 – 7:30 cleaning*

If outside janitorial service is contracted, each individual museum will ensure the safety and health of the contract janitorial staff members entering the museum building to clean. This includes the following:

1. All employees will be required to complete a daily wellness check ensuring they do not have fevers or any kind of symptoms – COVID 19 -related or otherwise. If any symptoms are present, they are instructed to consult with a medical professional.
2. All touch point cleaning will now be completed utilizing an EPA-approved disinfectant cleaner.
3. All employees will be trained on proper disinfection protocols usually reserved for healthcare workers.

4. All employees will be required to wear advanced PPE - gloves, safety glasses and masks or face protection.
5. Common area touch points and restrooms will be maintained multiple times per day and treated with medical-grade disinfectant to ensure every effort is made to provide a clean and safe working environment.
6. Enhanced cleaning services will be requested and scheduled to include deep cleaning and disinfection of key areas on a more regular basis including, but not limited to, phones, mouse and keyboard, keypads or data entry panels.

4. Update workplace policies - adherence to safety standards and implementation of PPE - and staff training

We collectively appreciate that health and safety protocols depend upon a well-trained staff and volunteer pool abiding by newly established, thoughtfully developed procedures. Following guidance from our industry, both the Association of Children's Museums and the American Alliance of Museums, each museum has developed detailed workplace policies specific to its unique needs. Prior to reopening, all staff and volunteers will go through comprehensive trainings about personal health and safety, museum safety and operations, appropriate ways of addressing visitor needs, and building sensitivity to mental health needs that may appear in young children.

Among workplace policies for re-entry to work are:

- All staff members will have a daily temperature check before entering the office spaces.
 - All staff will be asked to put on their masks prior to entering the building.
 - Upon arrival, staff members will have their temperature checked. Anyone with a temperature over 100.4 will be asked to go home and remain home until fever free for 48 hours without fever reducing medication.
 - All staff members interacting with the public will be required to wear masks.
 - Staff will be asked to wash their hands frequently throughout the day as well as use hand sanitizer when washing hands isn't possible.
- Staff Interaction with shared spaces and equipment will be clearly communicated
 - Use of copiers, printers, postage machines, and other shared equipment will be followed by specified cleaning guides
 - Use of lunch room or break room will honor social distancing, with specified cleaning steps for coffee makers, microwaves and refrigerators
- Use of office spaces will adhere to social distancing
 - Staff will move through the office spaces in a designated direction, when possible, throughout the day, with maximum numbers allowed in meeting spaces and conference rooms honored.
 - Staff will be assigned into working pods, and should only interact face to face with those people assigned to their working pods. If someone needs to work with someone outside her working pod, email, phone call or a Zoom call will be set up, to minimize germ-sharing beyond the pod.
- Operational procedures
 - All staff will review updated protocol for operating through extensive training (welcoming, interacting, facilitating learning with low-touch approach and demonstration models, cleaning, reporting, etc.) prior to re-opening.

- All staff will review comprehensive “Mental Health Tips” prepared jointly by the Louisiana Children’s Museum and Tulane Institute of Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health, so as to anticipate and identify various situations we may face with our guests.

<https://www.lcm.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Building-Resilience-Mental-Health-Tips-Bulleted-Version-3.pdf>

5. Timed ticketing - Social Distancing assured through Advance Registration and Entry Experience

Timed ticketing will be used for all guests (member and non-member) and will be purchased / reserved online, eliminating contact for ticket transaction, and providing a listing of guests, should it be needed later for contact tracing. Capacity numbers will be set at 25% of fire marshal limits. Museums will require those purchasing tickets to acknowledge that members of their household have none of the following symptoms

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>

- Have you or anyone in your household experienced the following symptoms in the last 14 days:
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
 - Fever
 - Chills
 - Muscle Pain
 - Sore throat
 - New loss of taste or smell

A typical daily schedule with timed ticketing for each person (scan upon entry) may look similar to the following schedule:

- 9:30 – 11:30 timed play
- *11:30 – 12:30 cleaning of all surfaces and replacement of any loose parts*
- 12:30 – 2:30 timed play
- *2:30 - 3:30 cleaning of all surfaces and replacement of any loose parts*
- 3:30 – 5:30 timed play
- *5:30 – 7:30 cleaning of all surfaces and replacement of any loose parts*

Communicate clearly – internally and externally to all stakeholders

Social media will provide dependable outlets for reaching members, users, donors and the public with explanations about the safety protocol and numerous changes we will make, as well as ample signage at the museum once patrons arrive. Our individual websites and Facebook pages will explain expectations and protocol that support health and governmental guidance. Internally, staff members and volunteers will continue to have trainings on operations and posted protocol reminders in key locations.

An important aspect to communications will be Contact Tracing, should a guest or employee become sick with COVID 19. As all museum guests will enter after securing on-line (advance) purchases of tickets or reservation for a timed entry, all museums will be able to reconstruct guests lists of who visited the museum on a specific day during a specific time, if needed in the coming days and weeks for contract tracing purposes.

Jointly prepared by:

Louisiana Children's Museum, New Orleans

Knock Knock Children's Museum, Baton Rouge

Children's Museum of Acadiana, Lafayette

Children's Museum of Southwest Louisiana, Lake Charles

Children's Museum of St. Tammany, Mandeville

Louisiana Children's Discovery Center, Hammond

Bayou Country Children's Museum, Thibodeaux

Kids Treehouse Museum, Alexandria

Northeast Louisiana Children's Museum, Monroe