

Guidance for School-based Hearing Screening During the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Pandemic

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This document outlines guidance and considerations for modifying existing school-based hearing screening practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Each school setting is unique and not all strategies will always be applicable.

Planning

- Consider moving screening location to a large, open space such as a library. Such a space would allow for minimum ambient noise while maintaining an open environment for air circulation. If such a space is not available, leave doors or windows open to increase air circulation.
- If it is necessary for students to wait in line to be screened, ensure they are spaced 6-feet apart. Mark floors to provide a visual guide for maintaining 6-foot distancing while waiting in line.
- Determine if the location enables separate entrance and exit doors. If possible, label doors clearly to ensure one-way foot traffic.
- Identify the records that need to be maintained in the event contact tracing is required and request or create a template for managing documentation.
- Because hearing screening requires specialized training, it may not be possible to train additional staff to perform screenings. Explore possible community partners to assist with hearing screenings.

Hand Hygiene

- Children must wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before and after screening.
- Technicians must wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water before screening, after any child contact, and at regular intervals throughout the day. Gloves may be worn during exams, but use of gloves does not negate the need for hand hygiene before and after testing.
- If soap and water are unavailable, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used.

Face Coverings

- KDHE recommends wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose, mouth, and chin and has multiple layers of fabric. Alternatively, a thinner disposable mask may be worn underneath a cloth face mask to improve the fit. For more information on the mask guidance visit: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/441/KDHE-Mask-Guidance-PDF---3-1-21>.
- Technicians and children should wear cloth face masks during screening. Technicians should not conduct hearing screenings if they cannot wear a mask.
- Perform hand hygiene before putting on and after removing face masks.

- To put children at ease, technician's may consider wearing a badge or sign with a smiling photo of their face.

Cleaning the Screening Location

- While the risk of COVID-19 infection from touching surfaces is low, KDHE recommends regular handwashing or use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and cleaning and disinfecting surfaces to reduce risk. To see the latest KDHE cleaning guidance, visit: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1966/COVID-19-Cleaning-and-Disinfection-Guidance-Non-Healthcare-Settings-PDF---5-11-2021>.
- Ensure the physical location is cleaned and sanitized using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#) prior to use.
- Clean surfaces using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#).
- Develop a schedule for increased routine cleaning and disinfection, with special attention paid to high-touch areas such as doorknobs and table tops.
- Sanitize chairs used during hearing screening between each use. Wash hands after sanitizing objects. Alternatively, students may stand for the screening.
- Cleaning products should be secured and out of reach of children.
- If pods or cohorts of students are used, clean and disinfect the screening area before children from another pod or cohort arrive.
- When possible, have no-touch trash cans available.
- Do not allow food, beverages, or personal items (bags, stuffed animals, books) in the screening room.
- For more information on cleaning protocols, see KDHE's guidance on [Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Business/Facility](#).

Screening Instruments

- Otoscope should be cleaned and disinfected after each use.
- Otoscope specula should be disposed of after each use, as with normal practice.
- Consider ordering disposable covers for headsets and earphones. If disposable covers are not available, headsets and earphones, including bands, should be cleaned and disinfected after each test. Headsets and earphones should be disinfected using an alcohol-free antiseptic solution. A quaternary ammonia compound or a hydrogen peroxide-based cleaner are recommended. Refer to [this list](#) of qualified disinfectants for specific products and their EPA registration numbers. More information can also be found on the list of [EPA-registered disinfectants](#).
- For play audiometry, have a large amount of equipment available. Equipment must be cleaned and disinfected after each use, so having a large amount available would reduce the need to clean as often.
- Tympanometer probe tips must be cleaned and disinfected after each use. Refer to [this list](#) of qualified disinfectants for specific products and their EPA registration numbers. They can also be cleaned of visible soil by washing in a solution of warm water and a mild detergent/soap. To disinfect ear tips, soak tips in a 10% bleach solution not to exceed one hour. Be sure tips are dry before placing them

on probe. More information can also be found on the list of [EPA-registered disinfectants](#).

References

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