

## **NYSARC Columbia County (dba Coarc) The Starting Place**

BEDS Code: 101300880231

March 1, 2021 Re-Opening Plan Amended for In-Person Learning

4410 Preschool/OCFS Licensed Daycare 41999DCC

65 Prospect Avenue

Hudson, New York 12534

At Coarc-The Starting Place (TSP), we have amended our plan to reflect the change in operation from remote learning to in-person learning per the New York State Department of Health and the New York State Education Department. TSP provides an in-person preschool special education program for 5 days a week.

Sarah Papp, RN serves as the program's COVID-19 Coordinator and Christine E. Kirch; Director of Children's Services (DCS) serves as the alternate. Sarah serves as a central contact for schools and stakeholders, families, essential staff and other school community members and ensures the program is complying and is following the best practices per state and federal guidelines.

### **Communication/Family and Community Engagement**

To aid in the development of our in-person learning plan, TSP has sought feedback and input from stakeholders, including administrators, essential staff (those staff assigned to working in the program), parents/guardians of children (daycare and special education preschool children), local Department of Health (LDOH) officials and Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS). Engagement efforts included surveys, emails, phone conversations and one-on-one conversations. The program remains committed to communicating all elements of this in-person learning plan to parents and guardians, staff and visitors. The plan is available to all stakeholders via the Agency website at [www.coarc.org](http://www.coarc.org) and is updated throughout the school year, as necessary, in response to changes in the pandemic status.

TSP developed communication materials accordingly, including the creation of sample messages/letters for COVID-19 cases or potential cases, for various school audiences. We utilize communication methods used by the Agency to inform the school community. Information is dispersed in a variety of platforms that include:

- Agency website
- Call list
- Email blast
- Online training
- Correspondence (letters) to homes
- Social media accounts used by the program and/or agency
- Town Hall Meetings (Zoom)

When necessary, the communications to families are in their spoken languages and in a format that is suitable to each family.

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### **Health and Safety**

The following protocols and procedures have been and will continue to be in place in our school for the 2020-21 school year for in-person daycare, Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) and preschool special education programming. Anyone with questions or concerns should contact our COVID-19 Safety Coordinator/designee at sarahp@coarc.org or christinek@coarc.org or by calling (518) 828-3890 x2502.

To ensure compliance with communication requirements, TSP:

- Posts signage throughout the building to remind everyone to adhere to proper hygiene, social distancing rules, appropriate use of PPE and cleaning/disinfecting protocols.
- Makes accommodations for the delivery of services for those children who have a higher risk due to medical conditions or who live with someone with higher risk, (including format and increased PPE protection worn by essential staff who are working with the child). For staff with increased risks, the program works with the Agency Human Resources Department to work towards potential worksite/job duty accommodations for that staff person.
- Maintains a continuous log of essential employees and visitors coming into the building who may have close contact with other people at the school.

If a staff member or child tests positive for COVID-19, the program immediately notifies the LDOH, OCFS and the Agency Administration and cooperates with contact tracing efforts. This includes notification of potential contacts, such as essential staff who had close contact, while maintaining confidentiality required by state and federal law and regulations. Parents will be notified as soon as possible as well.

### **Facility Entry**

Entry and egress for the building is limited to a single location. Anyone entering TSP must comply with the Agency COVID-19 Infection Control Policy for COVID screening. All staff members, essential visitors and children are screened for COVID-19 symptoms prior to entry into the school using the most current COVID-19 Health Screen Documentation (Attestation). All children, staff and essential visitors, are monitored for signs and symptoms of COVID-19 throughout the day. The records for health screenings are comprised of passing or failing the screening.

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**Facility Entry (cont.)**

*At Home Screening* (required):

Parents/guardians must agree to screen their child every morning prior to sending their child to school by completing a daily Health Screening Survey form, this form is to be provided to TSP before attending program and includes the following:

- **Assessing their child’s appearance, mood and affect each morning before school.**  
If the child seems unwell, the child should not come to school as they may be more susceptible to the illnesses of other children or may infect other children with an illness.
- **Taking their child’s temperature every day** to ensure that the child does not have a temperature of 100.0° F or higher. If the child has a temperature of 100.0° F or higher, the child cannot come to school and the parent/guardian must notify TSP.
- **Assessing their child for symptoms of illness each morning before school.**
  - Does your child currently have, or has your child had in the past 10 days, any of the following new or worsening symptoms: a temperature greater than or equal to 100.0° F, feel feverish or have chills, cough, loss of taste or smell, fatigue/feeling of tiredness, sore throat, shortness of breath or trouble breathing, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain or body aches, headaches or nasal congestion/runny nose?
  - IF the answer is yes to any of the symptoms listed above, the child cannot come to school and the parent/guardian must notify TSP.
- **Monitoring the COVID-19 status of all close contacts.**
  - If there is a COVID-19 positive person living in the child’s home or if the child has had close contact with any other COVID-19 positive person, the child will be unable to attend school in person and will have the option to participate in remote learning until released from quarantine by the LDOH.
  - The parent/guardian must immediately notify TSP if anyone who is in close contact with the child (within the household or outside of the household) is:
    - Diagnosed with COVID-19, or
    - Suspected of having contracted COVID-19 and is exhibiting symptoms.
- **Has your child tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days or is awaiting the result of a COVID-19 test?** If yes, your child is unable to come to school until released from isolation/quarantine by the LDOH and the parent/guardian must immediately notify TSP.

**Has your child traveled outside of the United States (not counting land travel to Canada) in the last 10 days?** If yes, your child is unable to come to school and the parent/guardian must notify TSP. Your child must remain home until the 10 day quarantine is complete and does not have symptoms of illness OR if your child has tested out of the 10 day quarantine and does not have symptoms of illness.

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### **Facility Entry (cont.)**

#### *At School Screening:*

The Program Nurse or her designee collects the Daily Health Screening Survey form from each child prior to the child entering the building each day. If the Daily Health Screening Survey **is not** with the child or if the child has not passed the screening, the child cannot attend program in-person that day, will be escorted to the isolation area and the parent/guardian is called to pick up their child within one hour.

#### **COVID-19 Screening Throughout the Day:**

If one or more of the COVID-19 symptoms begin while at school:

- ✓ Staff must notify their supervisor immediately and leave the building. The Program Nurse or DCS is responsible for making notifications to our Agency per the COVID-19 Infection Control Policy. Staff must follow Agency guidance on COVID-19 in order to return to work.
- ✓ Essential visitors must notify the person they are visiting at the school and immediately leave the building. The DCS is responsible for making notifications in accordance with the Coarc COVID-19 Infection Control Policy.
- ✓ Children will be isolated immediately and must be sent home as soon as possible. Parents or other emergency contacts are expected to pick up the child within one hour of notification. It is imperative that children are picked up from school in a timely fashion to minimize the potential spread of illness to the other children and staff.
- ✓ TSP is required to follow the LDOH and oversight agency requirements about suspected cases and subsequent isolation practices.

#### **Social Distancing**

Staff members support children to engage in the recommended 6 feet of social distancing whenever possible. Furniture in the classroom is arranged accordingly and groupings of staff/children are as consistent as possible with minimal intermingling among classes. The same staff works with the same children whenever and wherever possible. Different classes do not utilize common spaces at the same time and contact in hallways is avoided to the greatest extent possible.

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### **Infection Control**

- *Signs:* Signs are posted in prominent locations around the school relative to hand washing, hygiene expectations and other health and safety reminders as required by CDC, DOH and other oversight agencies.
- *Personal Protective Equipment:* All staff, children and essential visitors are required to wear a mask when in the program. The Starting Place provides masks to all staff, children and essential visitors and provides training on the proper use of the PPE, including masks, gloves, gowns and face shields as applicable.
- *Children:* Although children are required to wear a mask when in the program, enforcement is dependent on the level of tolerance of each child. If a child does not tolerate a mask or alternative for any reason, this will not affect in person programming, but the child will be encouraged to wear a mask or alternate face covering. Each classroom has an adequate supply of masks and required PPE. Children and staff are provided mask breaks throughout the day and at meal times.

### **Hygiene**

Strict adherence to hygiene requirements is essential to reduce transmission as advised by DOH and CDC. The Starting Place will follow these standards. All staff and children are asked to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer immediately upon entering the program. Staff and children must engage in frequent handwashing throughout the day. Proper handwashing procedures, including lathering and scrubbing hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water is the standard.

Handwashing will take place at the following times:

- Upon arrival,
- Before leaving and when entering a classroom/therapy room
- Before and after meals and snacks,
- Before and after therapies/related services,
- After sharing objects or surfaces,
- Upon coming in from outside/playground,
- After sneezing, wiping, or blowing nose or coughing into hands,
- After bathroom use,
- Before dismissal, and/or
- Anytime hands are visibly soiled

At times when hand washing is not available children and staff use a hand sanitizer:

- Signage is placed near sanitizer dispensers indicating soiled hands should be washed with soap and water
- Sanitizer dispensers are located near the entrance, in every classroom, every office and all therapy spaces as well as throughout common areas.

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### **Classrooms**

4410 Preschool Programs are not required to reduce capacity. Total group size is determined by our SED Program Approval Letter and OCFS licensing. Additional considerations are taken to account for space utilized for classrooms and teaching material.

### **Nurse's Office**

All children and essential staff are required to wear appropriate face coverings at all times when in the Nurse's Office. Only the nurse and one other person is allowed in the office. Children that receive daily medication are treated separately from children presenting with symptoms of illness. Nebulizer treatments are conducted in the nurse's office with only the nurse and the child present.

### **Reception Area**

Demarcations have been installed to indicate where visitors can stand to maintain social distance. The reception area has seating adequately spaced to provide a minimum of six (6) feet of separation.

### **Engineering Controls**

- Alcohol based hand sanitizer is available in each entry, in all corridors and in each classroom, in each therapy space and in all offices.
- Bathrooms are limited to one occupant at a time with adult staff assistance for children as necessary.
- Touchless soap dispensers are in place at each sink.
- Touchless paper towels dispensers are in place at each sink.
- The entrance or areas of static wait have floor signage installed indicating a minimum of six (6) feet of separation.
- Temperature Screening Equipment is available on site.

### **Ventilation**

The ventilation system had been upgraded per recommendations by the CDC.

### **Cleaning and Disinfection**

TSP continues to adhere to the Agency's COVID-19 Infection Control Policy and other protocols distributed by our oversight agencies. Regular cleaning and disinfection of the facility occurs, including more frequent cleaning and disinfection for high-risk and frequently touched surfaces. This includes desks and tables, which are cleaned and disinfected between each use. Cleaning and disinfection are rigorous and ongoing and occur at least daily, and more frequently as needed. Cleaning and disinfection logs are maintained that include the date, time and scope of cleaning and disinfection and are completed by staff and cleaning contract workers.

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### **Suspected or Confirmed COVID Cases Emergency Response**

Children and essential staff with symptoms of illness are assessed by the school nurse (Registered Professional Nurse, RN) or designee. The school nurse maintains medical documentation and assesses children with chronic conditions such as asthma and allergies or chronic gastrointestinal conditions. Due to these conditions a child may present with the same symptoms as COVID-19 but is neither contagious nor poses a public health threat. Proper PPE is required anytime a nurse is in contact with a potential COVID-19 person. Children suspected of having COVID-19 who are awaiting transport home by the parent/guardian are isolated in a room or area separate from others, with a supervising staff present utilizing appropriate PPE. Children are escorted from the isolation area to the parent/guardian. The parent or guardian is instructed to call their health care provider, or if they do not have a health care provider, to follow up with a local clinic or urgent care center.

### **Suspected or Confirmed COVID Cases Emergency Response (cont.)**

Protocols for disinfection of the isolation area include:

- Closing off areas used by a sick person and not using these areas until after cleaning and disinfection has occurred.
- Opening outside doors and windows to increase air circulation in the area.
- Alerting the outside cleaning company immediately to do a deep cleaning.
- Clean and disinfect all areas used by the person suspected or confirmed to have COVID-19 after waiting 24 hours whenever possible.
- Once the area has been appropriately cleaned and disinfected it can be reopened for use.

### **Notification**

The LDOH, Coarc Administration, OCFS, staff and parents are notified immediately upon being informed of any positive COVID-19 diagnostic test result for children, staff and visitors while maintaining confidentiality

### **Contact Tracing**

The LDOH in conjunction with TSP COVID-19 Coordinator or designee assumes the task of contact tracing, once notified.

### **Return to School after COVID Related Illness**

TSP has established protocols and procedures, in consultation with the LDOH(s), about the requirements for determining when anyone who screened positive for COVID-19 symptoms can return to the in-person learning environment. This protocol includes:

- Sufficient documentation from the health care provider following evaluation with symptom improvement, or
- Negative COVID-19 diagnostic test result with symptom improvement.
- If COVID-19 positive, documentation of release from isolation per LDOH.

*If an evaluation by a health care provider/COVID-19 test is not done, then return to the in-person learning environment is in accordance with the LDOH parameters for release from quarantine.*

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### **Return to School after a Childhood Related Illness or Surgery/Significant Injury**

When a child has an absence from the program due to illness, the parent or guardian must notify the program of the reason for absence and provide a doctor's note clearing the child to return to in-person program. The child must be free from acute symptoms or free of any parasites. If a child has undergone surgery or suffered significant injury, with or without stitches, the parent or guardian must provide a doctor's note stating the child can return to in-person program with no restrictions.

### **Closure Considerations**

When a person has been identified (confirmed) or suspected to be COVID-19 positive, TSP school administrators collaborate and coordinate with local health officials to make school closure determinations.

### **Emergency Response Protocols & Drills**

Emergency response drills, including evacuation, shelter in place and lockdown drills continue to be held at various times during the month.

#### *Shelter-In-Place*

Areas have been identified in our school that can be used for the Shelter-in-Place along with areas that cannot be used due to certain types of environmental hazards (i.e.; high winds, tornado, etc.). Shelter-In-Place protocols now include the following changes:

- Provide six (6) feet of space between children and staff during the Shelter-In-Place, and
- Use face coverings throughout the event as necessary, and
- If 6 feet between staff and children cannot be achieved, face coverings are worn at all times during the event.

#### *Evacuate*

Evacuation protocols are routinely the same with some minor adjustments:

- Identify areas outside of the building in advance that allow six (6) feet of separation of children and staff. Verify that children and staff do not impede emergency responders
- Identify, in advance, who is holding the door to get out of the building, therefore reducing the amount of people touching the door hardware when leaving the building. Essential Staff that is conducting this task may be assigned to holding the door for one or more classrooms or until confirmation that everyone has vacated the building.

#### *Lockdown*

In order to protect life safety, lockdown protocols are mostly the same process as they have been conducted in the past. Face coverings should be worn during the event at all times during a Lockdown, the ability to social distance may not be possible

### **Child Nutrition**

School snacks continue to be available to all children attending school in-person. We follow protocols and snack and beverage offerings as set forth by the Children and Adult Care Food Program.



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### **Meals Onsite**

For children onsite, meals are provided by families and sent to school and prepared by school staff who is wearing appropriate PPE (disposable gloves, appropriate face coverings).

Children and staff follow proper hand hygiene prior to preparing/handling and consuming any food or drink. Children do not need to wear face coverings when seated and eating as long as they are appropriately socially distanced. Those children with allergies are safely distanced from foods not provided from home or classrooms are designated nut free, etc., depending on the space and nature of the allergy. Children are closely supervised during meal and snack times with staff seated at each table. Areas where food and drink have been consumed are disinfected before and after meals. Each child or staff consumes their own food and beverage with no sharing of such items. Staff stagger their lunch times and eat in a location not in the presence of children where they can remove their mask and socially distanced from other staff and essential visitors.

### **Transportation**

TSP is not responsible for transporting children to and from the program. Counties of residence and parental transport dictate the way in which social distancing and COVID-19 protocols are carried out. TSP essential staff collaborate with the counties to communicate with families regarding their transportation protocol.

TSP:

- Advises parents not to send their children to school or board the bus if sick or with an elevated temperature
- Surveys parents regarding transportation including an “opt-out” option, and
- Reminds children/parents/guardians that social distancing requirements extend to the bus stop.

### **Loading/Unloading & Pickup/Drop-off**

- The first child on the bus sits in the back, when going to school and last child off sits in the back when going home from school.
- Dismissal times are staggered to best suit building needs and to promote social distancing.
- Adjustments are made by the program:
  - For unloading and entry and loading and departure,
  - For route timing which are affected by delayed loading/unloading processes, and
  - For ensuring social distancing is supervised during arrival and departure activities.

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### **Social Emotional Well-Being**

TSP has formed a team to examine the guidance provided by the Department of Health and NYSED. Supports include academics as well as the social and emotional well-being of our children. A Social-Emotional Learning Team was created consisting of certified teachers, certified school counselors, licensed mental health professionals, County representatives and school administrators. Resources also include SED, DOH, OCFS and other Early Childhood webinars and articles, which are already being implemented at our program. Additionally, all Coarc- employees have access to the Employee Assistance Program (EAP) which offers many free services including face-to-face and virtual counseling. Information about all social-emotional supports is made widely available to the Coarc community through TSP on our website. We are committed to developing and making accessible family/caregiver-appropriate social and emotional learning (SEL) content to be used during all phases of our programming.

### **School Schedules**

The in-person learning program operates five days per week. Those who opt for remote learning will have varying schedules, based on the child's IEP.

Each therapy service provider has a daily schedule for the children they work with, at the designated IEP frequency. Special Education Teachers hold Daily Circle Time meetings with the in-person children and have a device set up so that the children who are remote have the opportunity to join the Daily Circle Time session. Teachers provide daily updates to their classroom's website and multi-disciplinary homework packets are sent out to families for completion.

Schedules for children whose families opt to remain with remote learning are published to the family, when the request for remote learning is made.

We recognize the fluid nature of COVID-19 and will adjust learning models based on the needs at the present time or as requested by the family.

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### **Attendance, Attendance Reporting and Chronic Absenteeism**

#### *Attendance and Attendance Reporting*

Our program takes daily attendance for the daycare children, in person special education children, as well as recording attendance for remote learning children. Attendance policies and procedures are communicated with families and children prior to the start of the school year or if the instructional model changes during the year. Communication is done via parent letters, emails, text messaging, websites, and social media. Daily reports are generated to identify children who are absent and/or chronically absent. Contact with the families is made daily to determine reasons for absence and to determine the needs or barriers the child may have to participate in daily lessons.

#### *Chronic Absenteeism*

TSP addresses chronic absenteeism as follows:

- Communicates clearly to families and children what the attendance policy is and expectations for participating based on the model of instruction, and
- Tracks daily attendance and tardiness and alerts the County of residence and school district of such chronic absenteeism.

### **Technology and Connectivity**

TSP and the children's County of residence gather data from families to identify their level of access to devices and high-speed broadband from their residence. The school districts assess the ongoing needs of our families for technology and connectivity (survey, interviews, school outreach, etc.). In the event that children do not have access at home, the districts and Counties take the necessary steps to meet their needs. When there are remote learning challenges the teachers are the liaisons between the families and the school districts to resolve the issues.

TSP continues to ensure that we have the hardware, software and licenses to perform remote learning via the software platform in use for remote learning or virtual learning.

TSP continues to provide all children with access to learning materials and resources in multiple formats, whenever possible. The school districts and Counties support teachers through professional development and coaching on pedagogical methods. In the event children do not have sufficient access to devices and/or high-speed internet, the home district or County of residence provides the children with alternate methods to access materials and instruction (e.g. pick up materials at school, drop off materials to children's homes, etc.). The district and County of residence also schedules opportunities to connect with families to educate them on how to use the technologies and connect to the instructional activities.

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### **Teaching and Learning**

Our teaching and learning plan include a clear communication plan for how children and their families/caregivers can contact the school and teachers with questions about their instruction and/or technology. This information is accessible to all, available in multiple languages, adapted for the hearing and/or visually impaired if needed and is widely disseminated. Clear and multiple ways for children and families to contact schools and teachers (e.g. email, online platform and/or by phone) are included in an effort to assure learning for all.

Teachers are encouraged to spend time building relationships, supporting children with the transition back to school and teaching social distancing etiquette at developmentally appropriate levels.

When a remote, virtual or hybrid learning model is necessary, certain groups of children are prioritized for in-person learning to the greatest extent possible based on need and ability.

Our school minimizes the movement of children. This means eliminating field trips and other large-group activities. Special-area subjects (e.g. gross motor activities, related services) may be pushed into the classroom. Whenever possible children utilize outside spaces for gross motor activities. We encourage social distancing while participating in physical activity. To the extent possible, children remain in small cohorts if/when leaving the classroom, such as for recess or any necessary transition, so as to reduce their exposure to additional children.

Given the possibility that communities may experience spikes in COVID-19 cases at any point during the school year, which may prompt short or long-term school closures, our program has developed methods for fully remote learning. Remote learning opportunities for children include experiential learning on a regular basis via 1:1 Zoom sessions.

To ensure high-quality remote learning experiences, we standardized the use of a single online learning platform, to the extent possible and developed a common, coordinated set of guidelines for teachers to follow when using the platform with children.

Grading practices follow a standards-based framework designed to provide direct feedback regarding children's mastery of course content. We use a five-scale grading rubric based on levels of competency/mastery, which can then be aligned to Frontline or Cleartrack standards/format.

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### **Special Education**

TSP's special education programs and services provide equity and access for children with disabilities to be involved in and to participate and progress. The program documents the services offered and provided to children with disabilities as well as the communication with parents, in their preferred language and mode of communication (e.g. Related Services Log). The districts and Counties of residence ensure access to the necessary accommodations, modifications, supplementary aids, services and technology (including assistive technology) to meet the unique disability related needs of children.

TSP plans and supports collaboration between the Committees on Preschool Special Education (CPSE) and Committees on Special Education (CSE) and program providers representing the variety of settings where children are served to ensure there is an understanding of the provision of services consistent with the recommendations on Individualized Education Programs (IEPs), plans for monitoring and communicating progress and commitment to sharing resources.

### **Staffing**

#### **Certification, Incidental Teaching and Substitute Teaching**

All teachers hold valid and appropriate certificates for their teaching assignment, except where otherwise allowable under the Commissioner's regulations (e.g., incidental teaching) or education law.

### **Training**

TSP trains all staff on new protocols and frequently communicates safety guidelines. Social distancing and face coverings are required for all participants if training is conducted in person. Training material is designed to be easy to understand and available in the appropriate language and literacy level for all staff. Children are instructed through developmentally appropriate means such as presentation of social stories, visuals and the use of developmentally appropriate books that are read to them. Topics include COVID-19 hand hygiene, proper face covering wearing, social distancing, respiratory hygiene and disinfection of communal objects.

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**Key References**

- **State Education Department Issues Guidance to Reopen New York State Schools (July 16, 2020)**
- **State Education Department Presents Framework of Guidance to Reopen New York State Schools (July 13, 2020)**
- **Interim Guidance for In-Person Instruction at Pre-K to Grade 12 Schools During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, NYS Department of Health (July 13, 2020)**
- **Pre-K to Gr 12 COVID-19 Toolkit, NYS Department of Health (February 2021)**

**Additional References**

- **Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (June 26, 2020)**
- **Interim Guidance for Food Services during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (June 26, 2020)**
- **Interim Guidance for Office-Based Work during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency (June 26, 2020)**
- **Interim Guidance for Public Transportation Activities during the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency. (June 26, 2020)**
- **New York State Department of Health Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
- **New York State Education Department Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Coronavirus (COVID-19)**
- **Occupational Safety and Health Administration COVID-19 Website**
- **Coarc- The Starting Place Special Education and Daycare Parent Handbook**