

COVID-19 (2019 n-CoV) Guidance for K-12 School Nurses & Administrators

February 18, 2020

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) recently released updated guidance for childcare and K-12 settings about COVID-19 (coronavirus disease 2019) -- *formerly referred to as 2019-nCoV or 2019 novel coronavirus*. Some of the highlights are below. For more complete recommendations, visit the [school guidance page](#) at the CDC website.

PLEASE NOTE: On February 11, 2020, the [World Health Organization](#) announced that it officially changed the name for the disease involved in the current coronavirus outbreak to “coronavirus disease 2019,” abbreviated as COVID-19.

Planning and Preparedness for K-12

School administrators are encouraged to prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks in the U.S. by:

- Staying informed about COVID-19 through the CDC, the [Ohio Department of Health](#) and your local health departments.
- Share these prepared [CDC fact sheets and poster](#) with all students and staff.
- Share the following [CDC travel fact sheet](#) with students and staff who recently traveled back to the U.S. from China.
- Collaborate with your boards of education to review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs), particularly for infectious disease outbreaks. The U.S. Department of Education has outlined this [six-step process](#) for creating EOPs for K-12 schools.
- Develop flexible attendance and sick leave policies that encourage students and staff to stay home when sick or caring for sick family members.
- Alert your local health department about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses.
- Establish procedures for separating sick students and staff from those who are well and for sending sick students and staff home as soon as possible.

Response Recommendations for K-12

There are no confirmed cases COVID-19 in Ohio. However, the below recommendations are important for planning purposes. Decisions to temporarily dismiss K-12 schools should be considered on a school-by-school basis in consultation and coordination with school district officials and state and local health officials.

- Consider temporary dismissals of 14 days if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case.
- When schools are dismissed, schools should:

- Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events, including sporting events.
- Discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing outside school.
- Implement e-learning plans and distance learning options. The U.S. Department of Education offers recommendations for a [Digital Learning/Education Technology Plan](#).
- Work with state and local health officials to ensure continuity of supplemental feeding programs for school children; distribute through non-congregate settings. See [Meal Service During Unanticipated School Closures](#).
- Continue providing necessary services for children with special health care needs, or work with the state Title V Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program.

Background

- Currently, COVID-19 is not spreading in the community in the U.S., and the CDC considers risk to the general public to be low. There are 15 individual cases in the United States; 13 patients have travel history to Wuhan and two are close personal contacts of travellers.
- To minimize the risk of spread, health officials are working with health care providers and local health departments to promptly identify and evaluate any possible cases.
- Currently you are only at risk if you (1) are displaying symptoms; and (2) have traveled to China in the 14 days before feeling sick or have been in contact with someone who has or is being investigated for the virus. Travel history is key.
- People who have been diagnosed with COVID-19 have reported symptoms including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing that may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days after exposure to the virus. Remember, at this point you are more likely to catch the flu or a common cold, which show some of the same symptoms.
- ODH recommends precautions used for reducing the risk of infection for other illnesses, such as flu:
 - Wash your hands for 20 seconds or more with soapy water. If unavailable, use hand sanitizer.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Avoid contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay home while you are sick (except to visit a health care professional) and to avoid contact with others.
 - Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
 - Get adequate sleep and eat well-balanced meals to ensure a healthy immune system.

More information on coronavirus disease 2019 can be found on the [CDC](#) and [ODH](#) websites.