

Novel Coronavirus - Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Planning for Schools: Provisional Guidance

What is Novel Coronavirus?

A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](#) and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Incubation period

Ranges from 2-14 days

Contagious Period and Spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby and inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

There is not enough information about the transmission of the virus to completely understand when a patient can spread the virus to others.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 should treat symptoms symptomatically with appropriate medications. For severe cases, individuals should call their provider and/or seek medical care.

Control Measures of Spread:

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Teach children and staff to:

- Stay home you are ill
- Cough or sneeze into their sleeved arm or cover their nose and mouth with a tissue. Throw away the tissue after they use it and wash hands.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash their hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze; an alcohol-based hand rub can be used if soap and water are not nearby, but hand washing is always the best defense.
- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces like doorknobs, tables and handrails. Regular cleaning and sanitizing products can be used. For an additional list of recommended products visit: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf.

Teachers, Caregivers, and Families Should:

- Not come to school if they are ill
- Practice control measures listed above at home and in group care settings.
- Report any suspected infection to the staff member designated by the child care program or school.

Tri-County Health Department in Partnership with Schools

- Staff who are notified about a COVID-19 case or exposure to a case will inform designated school personnel with decision-making authority.
- Designated school personnel with decision-making authority will, in collaboration with the registered school nurse, will work closely with TCHD to coordinate next steps. <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/find-your-local-public-health-agency>
- TCHD will determine next steps in collaboration with the school administration and school nurse.

Exclusion

EXCLUDE children/students/staff with fever and respiratory symptoms from child care/school/work until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever (without the use of fever-reducing medicine) or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating).

Ill children/students/staff should be separated from others until they can go home.

Definitions of Isolation versus Quarantine

- Isolation is used to separate and restrict the movement of ill persons who have a communicable disease from those who are healthy and usually occurs in a healthcare setting.

- Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of well persons who may have been exposed to a communicable disease to see if they become ill. These people may have been exposed to a disease and do not know it, or they may have the disease but do not show symptoms. Since asymptomatic persons can still spread disease, quarantine can also help limit the spread of communicable disease.

RESPONSE – ACTIVE COVID-19 CASES IN THE COMMUNITY

School and event closure is not indicated while there is no evidence of community transmission. If there is one or more confirmed COVID-19 cases in a school or increase in community transmission, school closures may be considered in consultation with Tri-County Health Department (TCHD).

Some children and family members may be at higher risk for severe illness because of underlying health conditions (chronic respiratory disease, diabetes, etc) or a weakened immune system. Parents and staff must make the best decision for their families regarding their student's attendance.

1. Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs). Plan review and revisions should be done in collaboration with local health departments and other relevant partners where possible. Focus on the components, or annexes, of the plans that address infectious disease outbreaks.

- Review Infectious Disease Guidelines for Schools and Childcare Settings <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/infectious-disease-guidelines-schools-and-childcare-settings> (Specific pages include pp. 7-8, 18-20)
- **PLEASE NOTE: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) is a REPORTABLE CONDITION**
 - If you are notified that a student has been diagnosed with COVID-19 or has had direct contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19, immediately contact TCHD. Sharing this information with TCHD is permitted under FERPA.

2. Monitor and plan for absenteeism

- Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school among both students and staff.
- Alert TCHD about increases in student and staff absenteeism, particularly if absences are due to respiratory illnesses (like the common cold or the “flu,” which have symptoms similar to COVID-19).
 - If possible, school personnel monitoring attendance should ask the following information:
 - Name of student
 - Symptoms of child - especially for fever plus cough and/or shortness of breath
 - Have they been seen by a medical provider

- Review attendance and sick leave policies. Require students and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
 - Discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives.
 - Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.
 - Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning.
 - Always consult with TCHD prior to the decision to close your school.
- 3. Continue to educate students, staff and families on the importance of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.** Communicate community norms/expectations that everyone will follow hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.
- 4. Work with local education representatives and the local health officials to determine what actions should be taken to mitigate transmission.** Actions could include:
- Follow normal reporting procedures even in cases of suspected Novel Coronavirus.
 - Communicate regularly with parents informing them of the community and school status and expectations during periods of increased disease.
 - Work with local education representatives and the local health officials to determine what actions should be taken to mitigate transmission. Actions to consider might include:
 - Cancel extracurricular activities.
 - Cancel large class activities such as physical education, music education, etc.
 - Stagger school schedules so only specified grade(s) are in school at any given time. Keep children at least 6 feet apart.
 - Provide alternative education opportunities.
 - Cancel school trips such as those occurring over spring break.
 - Identify steps for dismissing students while providing educational services.
 - Dismiss students and keep teachers in school to provide alternative learning.
 - Dismiss staff and students and have teachers provide alternative learning.
 - Consider how to handle school lunches if students have been dismissed.
- 5. Ensure continuity of education.**
- Review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching and learning. Implement e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.
 - Determine, in consultation with school district officials or other relevant state or local partners:
 - If a waiver is needed for state requirements of a minimum number of in-person instructional hours or school days (seat time) as a condition for funding;
 - How to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and how to train teachers to do so;
 - How to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff;
 - How to encourage appropriate adult supervision while children are using distance learning approaches; and

- How to deal with the potential lack of students' access to computers and the Internet at home.

School Closure

Rationale for School Closure

There are three primary rationales for closing schools:

- (1) Limiting spread of the virus in the community,
- (2) Protecting vulnerable children, and
- (3) Reacting to staff shortages or children kept at home because of infections or parents' fears of infection.¹

Consideration/challenges for when schools are closed

1. Children being fed - access to meals
2. Child protection issues - younger children unsupervised because parent(s) has to work
3. Children/youth congregating in other sites (which can contribute to spread of infection)
4. Parent absenteeism from work in order to care for children
5. Children with special needs can have more difficulty learning when returning to school after extended absence

Addressing Parent Fear

It is important to keep students and families informed of actions that the school is taking, including the most up to date information regarding COVID-19 from reliable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (CDPHE), and TCHD.

In rapidly changing health events and outbreaks such as COVID-19, there can be large amounts of incorrect or partially correct information that can add to stress and confusion as a parent/caregiver, student, or school staff. Providing current, accurate, and frequent updates can help reduce stress and fear.

Get the most up-to-date and accurate information at:

Tri-County Health Department (TCHD): Call 303-220-9200 or visit <http://www.tchd.org/818/Coronavirus>

CDPHE: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/2019-novel-coronavirus>

CoHELP 303-389-1687 or 1-877-462-2911 for general public questions

CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Supporting Students, Families, and School Staff



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In addition to providing information regarding school actions and the latest information regarding COVID-19, students, family, and staff can benefit from information regarding emotional support. Here are some resources that could be helpful.

[Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

[WHO Infographic Helping Children Cope](#)

[National Association of School Psychologists Helping Kids Cope](#)

Reference

¹ Klaiman et al. BMC Public Health 2011, 11:73
<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3039590/>

Resources:

CDC Interim Guidance for School Administration: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>

Fact sheets and posters:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1eZydLBynhD2jmvxl8jFRutagMDbor5qe>