



FAQ for Schools and Districts: Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What It Is

Coronaviruses (CoV) are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS-CoV). A novel coronavirus (nCoV) is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans. The current virus that has been in the headlines, and that schools and districts should be preparing for, is the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

From world Health Organization: <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

What the Symptoms Are

For confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms typically appear 2-14 days after exposure. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

From the Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

How it Spreads

Current understanding about how the virus that causes coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) spreads is largely based on what is known about similar coronaviruses. COVID-19 is a new disease and there is more to learn about how it spreads, the severity of illness it causes, and to what extent it may spread in the United States.

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. 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.

From the Center for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

What Steps Should Schools Take?

- Send communications home about COVID-19 along with steps that the school is taking to mitigate the risk and plan for possible scenarios.
- Separate students and staff who get sick at school from others until they can go home.
- Limit close contact, like kissing and sharing cups or utensils, with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing. Help young children do the same.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.
- Follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product.

What Steps Should School Districts Take?

- Ensure your communications plans are up to date to allow for the effective and timely dissemination of up to date information to families, staff and the community.
- Communicate symptoms to families and staff recommending that staff and students who are ill should remain home; persons who have been ill should be fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medication before returning to school.
- Examine your sick-leave policies. Family-leave policies should also be looked at because many employees may unilaterally decide to remain at home, especially if they have small children or elderly relatives to care for.
- Encourage and utilize good hygiene practices (e.g., handwashing, coughing into the crook of the elbow instead of the hand). Can also provide signage and campaign materials.
- Remind your teachers and other employees to depend on only the most reliable sources for information about coronavirus. The World Health Organization (WHO), Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state and local health boards are reliable, as opposed to other mediums such as social media.
- Remember to remind all your stakeholders that situations like this are fluid and that the information given out now may be preliminary and subject to change. Even advice from the CDC and WHO can change, depending on the facts at hand.
- Ensure school cleaning supplies are fully stocked.
- Establish regular contact with local and state health officials to assess the current status of the community and plan for next steps.
- Review and/or determine protocols to be put in place in place for school dismissals and closures.
- Explore alternative and online learning options.
 - This should also include possible accommodations for students who may not have access to internet in their homes.
- Establish or revisit re-entry plans to prepare for the possibility of students returning from a school closure.

Where Can I Find More Information?

- Centers for Disease Control (CDC)
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>
 - [What You Need to Know](#)
 - [What to do If You are Sick?](#)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA)
<https://www.osha.gov/SLTC/covid-19/>
- World Health Organization
<https://www.who.int/news-room/q-a-detail/q-a-coronaviruses>
- State and Territorial Health Departments
<https://www.cdc.gov/publichealthgateway/healthdirectories/healthdepartments.html>
- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health, County)
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>
- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Washington State Department of Health (WSDH, State)
<https://www.doh.wa.gov/CommunityandEnvironment/Schools/EnvironmentalHealth/ClassroomCleaning>
- New York State Department of Health (NYSDH, State)
<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>
 - [Webinar](#) – Update on 2019 Novel Coronavirus for Schools February 7, 2020
 - [PDF of Presentation](#)