



Information for Illinois K-12 Schools Regarding 2019 Novel Coronavirus

What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)?

2019 Novel Coronavirus, or COVID-19, is a new respiratory virus identified in December 2019 as the cause of an outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. People who get sick with COVID-19 develop mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Illness can begin 2 to 14 days after an exposure. Although this virus likely emerged from an animal source, it can also spread from person-to-person. Spread from one person to another is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic.

The latest national situation summary updates, including the number of cases identified in the United States, are available on CDC's web page [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#). State situation updates can be found at DPH.ILLINOIS.GOV.

What is the health risk from COVID-19 in Illinois?

For the general American public (including most Illinoisans) who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low. The goal of the ongoing U.S. public health response is to detect new cases quickly and prevent community spread of COVID-19. The coming days and weeks are likely to bring more confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the U.S. and globally, but strong public health measures now may blunt the impact of the virus.

How can school officials prepare for coronavirus cases and outbreaks?

CDC recommends childcare and K-12 school officials:

- Collaborate with local health departments and partners to review, update, and implement emergency operations plans.
- Develop information-sharing systems with partners that can be used for day-to-day reporting and disease surveillance to identify unusual rates of absenteeism. Review attendance and sick leave policies; encourage students and staff to stay home when sick and establish procedures to ensure student and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning.
- Create communications plans for use with the school community.
- Plan to provide critical support services, such as continuity of education and continuity of school meal programs, if schools are dismissed.
- Reference the CDC interim guidance for U.S. childcare and K-12 schools available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>



Are there specific situations when schools should take precautions at this time?

Due to recent acceleration of COVID-19 transmission globally and in accordance with current federal guidance, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recommends the following:

- **Any student returning from a location with sustained widespread transmission (Travel Warning of Level 3) should not attend school for 14 days after the return date.**
- Absences for this purpose should be excused.
- Family members of these students should not attend work if they also traveled to one of the locations with a [Level 3 travel warning](#).

Current information on travel warnings is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

If a student who returned from an affected geographic location within the past 14 days or is a contact to a COVID-19 case, and develops respiratory symptoms including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, **report immediately** to your Local Health Department. **Please keep in mind there are other respiratory viruses like influenza currently circulating in Illinois.** Call ahead before taking the student to a doctor's office or emergency department to prevent any potential spread.

The situation is rapidly changing, and we are monitoring it closely. Guidance will be updated as needed.

What are the latest public health measures?

As of February 3, 2020, IDPH began receiving airport screening information on incoming travelers from all of China who may be at risk, and when indicated have been instructing them to stay home from school and work and monitoring them remotely. As the coronavirus continues to spread globally, new recommendations from CDC will be implemented for traveler screening and monitoring of at-risk travelers. IDPH will be in communication with school administration about individual situations as needed.

If we have a student who has been ill at school and is now a person under investigation (PUI), what do we tell parents?

In general, continue to follow your usual procedures for notification of parents/guardians whose students are ill at school. IDPH will follow up with schools who need more specific guidance.

Should we be concerned about classroom pets or other animals and COVID-19?

To date, CDC has not received any reports of pets or other animals becoming sick with COVID-19. At this time, there is no evidence that companion animals including pets can be infected with or spread COVID-19. However, since animals can spread other diseases to people, it's always a good idea to wash your hands after being around animals. It is recommended that people sick with COVID-19 limit contact with animals until more information is known about the virus.

*This has been adapted from the Chicago Department of Public Health.
Updated 2/27/20.*



If an animal becomes ill, the animal should be examined by a veterinarian. More information is available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/faq.html#2019-nCoV-and-animals>.

One of our students is an exchange student from China. Can they return home? Are there other countries where students should not travel?

CDC and IDPH recommend students **avoid travel to any country with a Level 3 Travel Warning**. Some individuals should **avoid non-essential travel to countries with a Level 2 Travel Warning**. The latest travel updates are available on CDC's web page [for Traveler Information at https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html).

How can schools prevent infections with COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases?

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19 infection. As with any respiratory virus, students and school personnel can protect themselves and others by taking every day common sense actions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Consult with your healthcare provider about getting an influenza vaccination if you haven't already done so.

IDPH **does NOT** recommend:

- the use of masks or gloves
- cancelling mass gatherings
- cancelling classes

Are any special cleaning procedures needed?

At this time, no special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning are necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. An EPA-registered product with an effectiveness claim against human coronaviruses should be used, and schools should follow standard processes for routine cleaning and disinfecting. Typically, this means daily sanitizing surfaces and objects that are touched often, such as bathrooms, water coolers/fountains, faucet handles, doorknobs, desks, computer keyboards and mice, hands-on learning items, phones and toys. The surface must be cleaned of all organic matter first in order for a disinfectant to be effective. Custodial staff should follow the disinfectant manufacturer's instructions for use including:

- Using the proper concentration of disinfectant
- Allowing the required wet contact time
- Paying close attention to hazard warnings and instructions for using personal protective items such as gloves and eye protection

*This has been adapted from the Chicago Department of Public Health.
Updated 2/27/20.*



School custodial staff are trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills, including blood, vomit, feces, and urine. The school custodian or school nurse should be contacted if students are ill and your classroom needs cleaning and disinfection. Schools and districts must have a Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for each chemical used in the school. General infection control guidance is available at www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol.

What should school-based health centers do to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

If a student calls ahead and reports a history of travel to one of the affected geographic locations within the last 14 days and has concerning symptoms, collect detailed history over the phone prior to deciding the location for triage. School-based health centers (SBHCs) should contact their Local Health Department immediately. If a student with concerning symptoms and travel history from areas of geographic spread presents to the clinic, follow recommended infection control precautions.

For more information, please visit DPH.ILLINOIS.GOV or www.cdc.gov/coronavirus.