



Guidance for Illinois Universities and Colleges 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 situation summary updates, including the number of cases identified in the United States, are available on CDC's web page [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

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

Currently, the health risk to the general public from COVID-19 remains low, both in the U.S. and in Illinois. 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.

What special precautions do schools in Illinois need to take?

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

- **Any student, faculty member, or other university staff returning from mainland China should not attend school or work for 14 days after the return date.**
- Absences for this purpose should be excused and alternate arrangements should be made for teleworking and online school assignments.

Individuals who returned from mainland China in the previous 14 days and develop respiratory symptoms including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, should seek medical care right away. University health services should immediately notify their Local Health Department.

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 airport screening procedures have changed, starting February 3, 2020, IDPH began receiving information on incoming travelers from all of China who may be at risk, and when appropriate instructing them to stay home from school and

*This document was adapted from the Chicago Department of Public Health
Revised 2/18/20. Please visit DPH.ILLINOIS.GOV to find the latest version.*



work, and monitoring them remotely. IDPH will be in communication with school administration about individual situations as needed.

How should schools prepare for the potential of coronavirus in their community?

Instruct all students, faculty, and staff who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and have traveled to China in the previous 14 days to immediately contact university health services or another contact as designated by the university.

- Report any ill students with a travel history to IDPH immediately.
- Ensure students who may need to be quarantined or isolated and cannot return to their home have housing and basic needs.
- Develop a plan for outbreak response and share with stakeholders.
- Create an emergency communication plan and maintain up-to-date contact information for everyone in your communication chain.
- Establish leadership team, identify essential staff functions, assign tasks, and responsibilities.
- Plan workshops and trainings to educate staff on prevention services.

Do school events need to be cancelled?

At this time, there is no need to cancel school or social events. However, as with any respiratory virus, students, faculty members, and other university staff should stay home and avoid events when they are ill.

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

IDPH will follow up with schools who need more specific guidance.

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

CDC recommends that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

One of our students/staff members is from China. Can they return home?

IDPH recommends **avoiding travel to China**. The latest travel updates are available on CDC's web page [Traveler's Health](#).

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 everyday 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.

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. Schools should follow standard processes for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product. 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 travel to China within the last 14 days and has concerning symptoms, collect a detailed history over the phone prior to deciding the location for triage. School-based health centers (SBHCs) should notify their Local Health Department immediately.

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