



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?

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 returning from mainland China 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 mainland China.

If a student who returned from mainland China within the past 14 days 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 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 work, and monitoring them remotely. 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?

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 is an exchange student from China. Can they return home?

IDPH recommends students **avoid 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 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.

IDPH **does NOT** recommend:

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

Are any special cleaning procedures needed?

*This has been adapted from the Chicago Department of Public Health.
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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 with travel to China within the last 14 days and 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.

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