Interim Guidance for K-12 Schools and Pre-K Programs Operated by Schools

February 28, 2020

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Currently, in the United States, the risk of COVID-19 for the general public is low. The US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available. Please check the CDC website and the Kansas Department of Health & Environment website periodically for updated interim guidance.

Although precautions are necessary to prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 into US communities, care should be taken to avoid stigmatizing students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus. K-12 schools and Pre-K programs operated by schools offer a welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environment to all and should continue to do so. Measures taken by US K-12 schools and Pre-K programs should help prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 by students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus while minimizing disruption and protecting students and staff from discrimination.

This interim guidance is intended primarily for administrators* of public and private K-12 schools and Pre-K programs operated by schools in the United States to help prevent the introduction of COVID-19 into their facilities. It recommends actions that school administrators should take now to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students and staff and to help maintain continuity of teaching and learning if there is community spread of COVID-19 in the future. This interim guidance also suggests strategies to consider if public health officials determine that COVID-19 is spreading in US communities and educational settings.

Planning and Preparedness Recommendations for All US Schools Nationwide

There are laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States. As this global outbreak evolves, US communities, including schools, are encouraged to prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks in the United States. Administrators of K-12 schools and Pre-K programs nationwide should take the following actions to plan and prepare for COVID-19:

- Stay informed about COVID-19 through CDC and your state and local health departments.
  - Share the following CDC fact sheets and poster with students and staff:
    - What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019
    - What the public should do to prevent spread of COVID-19 in the United States
Stop the spread of germs – help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19

- Share the following CDC fact sheet with students and staff who recently traveled back to the United States from China:

Travelers from China arriving in the United States – health alert

- Collaborate with your local public organizations and boards of education to review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs), particularly for infectious disease outbreaks.

  - The US Department of Education has outlined a 6-step process for creating EOPs for K-12 schools (see https://rems.ed.gov/K12GuideForDevelHQSchoo.aspx).
  - Develop flexible attendance and sick leave policies that encourage students and staff to stay home when sick or when caring 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.
  - Implement school absenteeism monitoring systems to track student and staff absences.
  - Understand the usual absenteeism patterns at your school.
  - Alert your local health department about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses.
  - Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning.
  - Establish procedures for separating sick students and staff from those who are well and for sending sick students and staff home as soon as possible.

Response Recommendations for Schools in US Jurisdictions with Laboratory Confirmed Cases of COVID-19 Infection

In addition to taking the actions listed above, administrators of K-12 schools and Pre-K programs in US jurisdictions with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases may need to implement the following activities in response to COVID-19 if there is community spread in the future. Administrators should develop plans for:
School dismissals**

Decisions to temporarily dismiss K-12 schools and Pre-K programs in the affected area should be considered on a school-by-school basis, and in consultation and coordination with school district officials and state and local health officials.

- Decisions to dismiss schools based on COVID-19 concerns should be discussed with KDHE and your local public health department.
- The length (duration), geographic scope, and public health objective of school dismissals may be reassessed and changed as the local outbreak situation evolves.
- When schools are dismissed, schools should:
  - Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events, such as after-school assemblies and pep rallies, field trips, and sporting events.
  - Discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere, like at a friend’s house, a favorite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.
  - Implement e-learning plans and distance learning options for continuity of education, to the extent possible.
  - Work with state and local health officials to ensure continuity of school children-directed supplemental feeding programs.
  - Meal Service during Unanticipated School

This is an interim document and when more information is received from the CDC and Kansas Department of Health and Environment more guidance will be provided at that time.

Definitions Used in this Guidance

*Administrators oversee the daily operations of K-12 schools and Pre-K programs. Administrators may include positions like school district superintendents, principals, and assistant principals.

Pre-K program means an early childhood program operated by a public or private school.

This interim document will be updated when credible and up-to-date guidance is provided by the CDC and KDHE.
For More Information

CDC Resources
- Coronavirus Disease 2019 website
- Children and Youth with Special Healthcare Needs in Emergencies
- Do Your Part. Slow the Spread of Germs
- Don’t Spread Germs at Work
- Stay Home if You’re Sick

Other Federal Agencies and Partners Resources
American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- Reducing the Spread of Illness in Child Care: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Prevention-In-Child-Care-or-School.aspx
- Germ Prevention Strategies: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthissues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Germ-Prevention-Strategies.aspx
- When to Keep Your Child Home from Child Care: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/When-toKeep-Your-Child-Home-from-Child-Care.aspx