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

March 14, 2020

This interim guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). 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 spread 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.

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

What is the role of schools in responding to COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy. More information on COVID-19 is available [here](#).

Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments. Schools serve students, staff, and visitors from throughout the community. All of these people may have close contact in the school setting, often sharing spaces, equipment, and supplies.

Guidance for schools with identified cases of COVID-19 identified in their community.

To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for schools to do now is **plan and prepare**. As the global outbreak evolves, schools should prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks. Schools want to **be ready** if COVID-19 does appear in their communities.

If local health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, schools may need to take additional steps in **response** to prevent spread in the school. <u>**The first step for schools in this situation is to talk with local health officials.**</u> The guidance provided here is based on *current knowledge* of COVID-19. As additional information becomes available about the virus, how it spreads, and how severe it is, this guidance may be updated. Administrators are encouraged to work closely with local health officials to determine a course of action for their childcare programs or schools.

Determine if, when, and for how long childcare programs or schools may need to be dismissed.

Temporarily dismissing childcare programs and K-12 schools is a strategy to stop or slow the further spread of COVID-19 in communities. During school dismissals, childcare programs and schools may stay open for staff members (unless ill) while students stay home. Keeping facilities open a) allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning; and b) allows other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts.

<u>Childcare and school administrators should work in close collaboration and coordination with local health officials to make dismissal and large event cancellation decisions.</u> Schools are not expected to make decisions about dismissal or canceling events on their own. Schools can seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps. Large event cancellations or school dismissals*** may be recommended for 14 days, or possibly longer if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., geographic scope, duration) may change as the local outbreak situation evolves.

If an ill student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case:

- **Local health officials may recommend temporary school dismissals if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case.** Local health officials' recommendations for the scope (e.g., a single school, a full district) and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the impacted community.

- **Schools should work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure**. This communication to the school community should align with the communication plan in the school's emergency operations plan. In such a circumstance, it is critical to maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
- **If a student or staff member has been identified with COVID-19, school and program administrators should seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to schools and what additional steps are needed for the school community.** In addition, students and staff who are well but are taking care of or share a home with someone with a case of COVID-19 should follow instructions from local health officials to determine when to return to school.

   - **Consider alternatives for providing essential medical and social services for students.**
     - Continue providing necessary services for children with special healthcare needs, or work with the state *Title V Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program*.

KANSAS GUIDANCE

KSDE is working towards preparedness and preparation for COVID-19 spread across the United States. Governor Laura Kelly announced that Kansas's exposure is low at this moment and time. We still need to be vigilant and prepared for if/when the outbreak occurs in Kansas.

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What is the role of schools in responding to COVID-19?

Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases to help ensure students have safe and healthy learning environments. Schools serve students, staff, and visitors from throughout the community. All of these people may have close contact in the school setting, often sharing spaces, equipment, and supplies.

Schools with staff or students who have traveled outside of the U.S. as of February 25, 2020 and until all travel bans are lifted should check-in with their local public health department with their travel history, and follow the guidance from the public health department regarding isolation or quarantine measures.

If a local health department, in cooperation with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment, the President of the United States or the Kansas Governor requires the closure of

a school due to an active case (student or staff member) with COVID-19, schools will have three options:

1. Make up the missed school days by June 30, 2020.
2. Submit a proposal to KSDE for the delivery of e-learning to be counted as seat time.
3. Submit a petition to the Kansas State Board of Education and the Kansas Commissioner of Education to waive the legally required minimum number of hours and days schools must be in session.

If your school is required to close due to COVID-19, the requirement from KDHE is that the school will be closed for a minimum of 14 days, after which time the communal spread of the virus will be reassessed before the school is cleared to reopen. During this mandated closure, schools will be required to conduct a deep cleaning of the building.

If a local school district decides independently (without the recommendation of KDHE and the local health department, the President or the Governor) to close schools, the schools would be required to make up all lost time by June 30, 2020.

For specific information on the virus, schools are encouraged to contact the Kansas Epi Hotline, 877.427.7317.

For the most updated information on COVID-19, please visit www.kdheks.gov.

If schools are dismissed, schools can consider the following steps:

- **Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events.**
    - Cancel or postpone events such as after-school assemblies and pep rallies, field trips, and sporting events.
- **Discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere.**
    - Discourage gatherings at places like a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.
- **Ensure continuity of education.**
    - Review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching and learning. Implement e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.
    - Determine, in consultation with school district officials or other relevant state or local partners:
        - If a waiver is needed for state requirements of a minimum number of in-person instructional hours or school days (seat time) as a condition for funding;
        - How to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and how to train teachers to do so;
        - How to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff;
        - How to encourage appropriate adult supervision while children are using distance learning approaches; and

- How to deal with the potential lack of students' access to computers and the Internet at home.
- **E-learning requirements**
  - Teachers working with students are appropriately licensed in the state of Kansas.
  - Student attendance is tracked and monitored to ensure compulsory attendance laws are followed.
  - All courses are aligned to local, state, and national standards and contain a syllabus and assignment completion timelines.
  - Students, families and teachers receive sufficient orientation on the E-learning platform.
  - Students and families are provided with teacher contact information.
  - Ensure students and teachers have sufficient access to the internet, hardware and software in their homes.
  - Interventions are available to address student academic, attendance and behavior needs.
  - Special education, English learners, migrant, and homeless services are provided in adherence to state/federal law and guidance.
  - **State assessments <u>may not</u> be administered in an e-learning environment.**
  - **Ensure continuity of meal programs.**
    - Consider ways to distribute food to students.
    - If there is community spread of COVID-19, design strategies to avoid distribution in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd. Consider options such as "grab-and-go" bagged lunches or meal delivery.

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Childcare and K-12 administrators can also support their school community by sharing resources with students (if resources are age-appropriate), their families, and staff. Coordinate with local health officials to determine what type of information might be best to share with the school community. Consider sharing the following fact sheets and information sources:

- Information about COVID-19 available through [state]() and [localexternal icon]() health departments
- General CDC fact sheets to help staff and students' families understand COVID-19 and the steps they can take to protect themselves:
  - [*What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*pdf icon]()
  - [*What to do if you are sick with coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)*]()

- - *Stop the spread of germs – help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19*pdf icon
- CDC Information on COVID-19 and children
- CDC information for staff, students, and their families who have recently traveled back to the United States from areas where CDC has identified community spread of coronavirus:
  - A list of countries where community spread of COVID-19 is occurring can be found on the CDC webpage: *Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel*

For questions about students who plan to travel, or have recently traveled, to areas with community spread of COVID-19, refer to CDC's FAQ for travelers. Schools can also consult with state and local health officials. Schools may need to postpone or cancel trips that could expose students and staff to potential community spread of COVID-19. Students returning from travel to areas with community spread of COVID-19 must follow guidance they have received from health officials. COVID-19 information for travel is updated regularly on the CDC website.

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) •
   Hand Washing: A Powerful Antidote to
Illness: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Hand-Washing-A-Powerful-Antidote-toIllness.aspx

- 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/WhentoKeep-Your-Child-Home-from-Child-Care.aspx

Kansas
Department of Health
and Environment