

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

Interim Guidance for Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools




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](#) 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. Childcare programs and K-12 schools offer a welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environment to all and should continue to do so. Measures taken by US childcare programs and K-12 schools 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 childcare programs and K-12 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 childcare programs and K-12 schools 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.
 - Please 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](#) 
 - Please 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 childcare licensing organizations and board of educations 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/K12GuideForDevelHQSchool.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 childcare programs and K-12 schools in US jurisdiction with laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 cases may need to implement the following activities in **response** to COVID-19 there is community spread in the future. Administrators should develop plans for:

*School dismissals***


Decisions to temporarily dismiss childcare programs and K-12 schools 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.

- To help reduce the possibility of further transmission of COVID-19 within schools and within the larger community, consider temporary dismissals of 14 days if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed COVID-19 case.
 - 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 parades, 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.
 - Work with state and local health officials to ensure continuity of school children-directed supplemental fee



programs.

- 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*.

Continuity of education during school dismissals

- Establish a *Digital Learning/Education Technology Plan* recommended by the US Department of Education (see <https://tech.ed.gov/netp/> ), which includes:
 - Teacher check-ins and tutorials using a variety of technologies including cell phones, computers, tablets, and web-based tools.
 - Recorded class meetings using audio and video technologies via podcasts, public access TV, DVDs, or online.
 - Live class meetings (such as conference call-ins, online courses, or virtual schools) with 2-way interactions between students and teachers.
 - Other student support services such as print materials available online, counseling support, or study groups enabled through digital media.
- Schools will need to determine, in consultation with school district officials:
 - 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 in the event of community spread of COVID-19;
 - How to encourage adult supervision while children are at home learning; and
 - How to deal with the potential lack of students' access to computers and the Internet at home.

Continuity of school meal programs during school dismissals

- Continue the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) with support from the US Department of Agriculture (USDA) (see <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program>  and Meal Service during Unanticipated School Closures <https://www.fns.usda.gov/cn/meal-service-during-unanticipated-school-closures> ).
- Create a plan to distribute weekday meals in non-congregate settings if there is community spread of COVID-19 through “grab-and-go” bagged lunches or through delivery).





Definitions Used in this Guidance

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

**During school dismissals, childcare programs and K-12 schools stay open for staff members (unless ill) while the students stay home. Keeping the school facilities open a) allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning; and b) allows other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts.



For More Information

CDC Resources

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 website](#)
- [Health Alert Network: Update and Interim Guidance on Outbreak of Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [Interim US Guidance for Risk Assessment and Public Health Management of Persons with Potential Coronavirus Disease 2019 Exposure in Travel-associated or Community Settings](#)
- [About Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [What to Do If You Are Sick with COVID-19](#) 
- [Interim Guidance for Persons Who May Have Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) to Prevent Spread in Homes and Residential Communities](#)
- [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travelers](#)
- [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-to-Illness.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Hand-Washing-A-Powerful-Antidote-to-Illness.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](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/health-issues/conditions/prevention/Pages/Germ-Prevention-Strategies.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/health-issues/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-to-Keep-Your-Child-Home-from-Child-Care.aspx](https://www.healthychildren.org/English/family-life/work-play/Pages/When-to-Keep-Your-Child-Home-from-Child-Care.aspx) 