

Preparing Your Schools for Coronavirus

Tips for school leaders to prevent the spread of coronavirus and prepare for possible disruption to your schools



Take time now to ensure your schools are ready:

Review and update your existing emergency operations plan.

Review all aspects of your school's operations, such as personnel, systems, services, and other resources. Communicate with key partners and clearly define each partner's role, responsibilities, and decision making authority. See resources (next page) for guidance and templates.

Update your emergency communication plan.

Be sure staff, students, suppliers, and key partners know how to stay up-to-date on the latest news.

Ensure sick students and staff stay home.

Sick students and staff should not come to school. If a student or staff member comes to school with symptoms, ask them to go home. Offer paid sick leave so staff do not have to decide between a paycheck and working while sick.

Plan for student and staff absences.

Develop flexible attendance and sick-leave policies for students and staff. Staff may need to stay home when they are sick, caring for a sick person, or caring for their own children if some schools are closed. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.

Work with cleaning staff to make sure spaces are cleaned and disinfected frequently and correctly.

Coronavirus does not require special disinfection products. The CDC has basic information on cleaning, disinfecting, and sanitizing: bit.ly/cleaningschools

Keep a well-stocked supply of tissues, hand sanitizer, soap, and disinfecting wipes. Place them in easy to access spots.

Encourage staff and students to use these items often. CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including coronavirus. Students and staff should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it.

Post signs about coughing/sneezing etiquette and handwashing.

CDC has lots of resources for this: cdc.gov/handwashing/posters.html

Encourage students and staff to get their flu shot.

In the future, consider mandatory flu vaccination policies and school-based flu vaccination clinics.

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Develop a method for tracking sick-related absences.

Understand the usual absenteeism patterns at your school. Determine what level of absences will disrupt continuity of learning. If absenteeism increases to disruptive levels, schools might consider temporarily closing.

Review your process for planning school events.

Your emergency operations plan should include information about what will trigger cancelling or postponing activities and events. Identify actions to take if you need to postpone or cancel student activities, meetings, and sporting events. Consider limiting access to school campuses by nonessential visitors.

Increase space between people.

Move desks farther apart, leave empty seats between students, divide classes into smaller groups, and hold outdoor classes.

Identify space that can be used to separate sick people.

Designate a space for sick staff and students who cannot leave school immediately. If possible, also designate a nearby separate bathroom just for sick people. Be sure the space and bathroom are cleaned daily.

Identify strategies to continue essential student services.

If schools are closed, meal, health, and social services may need to continue.

Remind staff, students, and parents to avoid assumptions or stereotypes about who they think might be sick.

Viruses do not recognize race, nationality, or ethnicity. Speak up if you hear, see, or read misinformation or harassment. Create learning opportunities for students and staff that dispel racist and misinformed ideas.

Resources

[Get Your School Ready for Pandemic Flu](#)

CDC

[Get Your Workplace Ready for Pandemic Flu](#)

CDC

[Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans: At a Glance](#)

Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools

[Sample School Emergency Operations Plan](#)

FEMA