

March 3, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians,

The health and safety of our students and staff is our top priority, and we are writing to update you on the most current recommendations of local, state, and federal health authorities regarding health risks associated with Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). In partnership with the Chicago Department of Health and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the district is working to ensure our schools are safe for students and staff.

Based on what we've seen in affected countries, COVID-19 can cause mild to severe respiratory illness and children seem to be less likely to become ill. The virus appears to be transmitted through person-to-person contact and health authorities expect more cases may occur in Chicago and the United States. Practicing basic hygiene such as washing your hands regularly with soap is the best way to stop the transmission of the virus.

In order to keep our students, staff, and our fellow Chicagoans safe, the district has partnered with the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) to issue the following guidance.

**If you're sick, stay home.**

- CPS staff or students who have traveled to a location with [widespread community transmission](#) of COVID-19 should stay home for 14 days after their return date.
  - Search COVID-19 risk assessment by country at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/>
  - Student absences will be marked as excused.
  - For more information, please see this fact sheet from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: "[What to do if you are sick](#)" [[Spanish](#)] [[Simplified Chinese](#)].
- All sick students and employees (with symptoms of respiratory illness such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath) should consult their health care provider and stay home from school or work until their symptoms resolve.
  - Student absences will be marked as excused.
- Students who are sick will be sent home immediately. We will contact you to schedule a pick-up.
  - Please ensure your child's school has your most up-to-date contact information.
- Parents/guardians of children with chronic conditions (like asthma) should work with their health care providers to ensure any necessary rescue and controller medicines are on hand and take special care to keep the illnesses well-managed and under control.
- If you need help identifying a source of primary medical care, please call 773-553-KIDS.

**Practice good hygiene.**

- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is best, especially if they are visibly dirty. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol is a suitable alternative.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.

According to local health authorities, no special disinfection products or methods are recommended at this time. The district has ordered additional cleaning wipes and sanitizers and will be delivering it to schools as soon as possible, in addition to performing routine cleaning and ensuring schools continue to be stocked with cleaning supplies.

As testing of COVID-19 becomes more widely available, we may begin to see new cases in the coming days and weeks. CPDH along with state and federal authorities may issue new guidance, and we will keep you updated on changes and its impact on our schools. At this time, the district is not considering closing schools based on the recommendation of local health authorities.

Finally, **COVID-19 does not distinguish between race, nationality, or geographic borders.** Stigma and discrimination against the afflicted discourages early reporting of symptoms and further perpetuates community spread. If you believe your child has been the victim of discrimination, please contact the Office of Student Protections and Title IX (OSP) by phone at 773-535-4400 or email at [osp@cps.edu](mailto:osp@cps.edu)

For the most reliable information, please visit [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the CDPH Coronavirus hotline at 312-746-4835 or email [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov). You may also reach out to the CPS Office of Student Health & Wellness at [oshw@cps.edu](mailto:oshw@cps.edu) or by calling the Healthy CPS Hotline 773-553-KIDS (5437).

Sincerely,

Kenneth Fox, MD  
Chief Health Officer  
Chicago Public Schools

Allison Arwady, MD  
Commissioner  
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