



Coronavirus Disease 2019

COVID-19

Planning for schools and child care facilities

What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a novel, or new, coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing COVID-19 is not the same as the [coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans](#) and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

Signs and Symptoms

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

Incubation period

Ranges from 2-14 days

Contagious period and spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person to person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

There is not enough information about the transmission of the virus to completely understand when a patient can spread the virus to others.

Treatment

There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 should receive supportive care to help relieve symptoms. For severe cases, treatment should include care to support vital organ functions.

Control measures of spread

There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19. The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

Teach children and staff to:

- Cough or sneeze into their sleeved arm or cover their nose and mouth with a tissue. Throw away the tissue after they use it and wash hands.
- Avoid touching their eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Wash their hands frequently and for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, especially after they cough or sneeze; an alcohol-based hand rub can be used if soap and water are not nearby.
- Avoid sharing cups and eating utensils with others.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces like doorknobs, tables, drinking fountains and handrails. Regular cleaning products can be used. For an additional list of recommended products visit:
<https://www.americanchemistry.com/Novel-Coronavirus-Fighting-Products-List.pdf>
- Family style serving should be avoided if possible. It is recommend that the adults prepare each child's plate using gloves.
- If napping mats are used, children should be kept at least 6 feet apart if possible and mats should be cleaned after each use.

Teachers, caregivers, and families should

- Practice control measures listed above at home and in group care settings.
- Report any suspected infection to the staff member designated (health staff, school nurse, or childcare director) by the child care program or school.

School staff and local public health agency

- Notified staff will inform designated school personnel with decision-making authority.
- Designated school personnel with decision-making authority will, in collaboration with the registered school nurse, coordinate next steps with the local public health agency (LPHA).
<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/find-your-local-public-health-agency>
- LPHAs will determine next steps in collaboration with the school administration and school nurse.

Exclusion

- EXCLUDE children/students/staff with fever AND respiratory symptoms from child care/school/work until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever (chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating) without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
- Ill children/students/staff should be separated from others until they can be picked up/go home.

Response: Active cases in the community

School, child care, and event closure is not indicated while there is no evidence of community transmission. If there is an outbreak in a school, child care or increase in community transmission, school and child care closures may be considered in consultation with local public health agencies. Some children and family members may be at higher risk for severe illness because of underlying health conditions or a weakened immune system. Allow parents to make the best decision for their families regarding their child's attendance.

1. Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs).

This should be done in collaboration with local health departments and other relevant partners where possible. Focus on the components, or annexes, of the plans that address infectious disease outbreaks.

- Review Infectious Disease Guidelines for Schools and Childcare Settings
<https://www.colorado.gov/cdphe/infectious-disease-guidelines-schools-and-childcare-settings>
(Specific pages include pp 7-8, 18-20)
- **PLEASE NOTE: COVID-19 is a REPORTABLE CONDITION**
 - If you are notified that a student has novel coronavirus contact your local health department. This is allowed for under FERPA.

2. Monitor and plan for absenteeism

- Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school/child care among both students and staff.
- Alert local health officials about increases in student and staff absenteeism, particularly if absences appear due to respiratory illnesses (like the common cold or the “flu,” which have symptoms similar to COVID-19).
 - If possible, school/child care personnel monitoring attendance should ask the following information:
 - Name of student
 - Symptoms of child - especially for fever plus cough and/or shortness of breath
 - Have they been seen by a medical provider
- Review attendance and sick leave policies. Require students and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care 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.
- Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning.

3. Continue to educate students, staff and families on the importance of hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette.

4. Work with local education representatives and the local health officials to determine what actions should be taken to mitigate transmission.

Actions could include:

- Heighten disease surveillance and reporting to the local health department. Follow normal reporting procedures even in cases of suspected COVID-19.
- Communicate regularly with parents informing them of the community and school status and expectations during periods of increased disease.
- Identify specific steps to keep school in session. Work with local education representatives and the local health officials to determine what actions should be taken to mitigate transmission. Actions could include:

- o Cancel extracurricular activities.
- o Cancel large class activities such as physical education, music education, etc.
- o Stagger school schedules so only specified grade(s) are in school at any given time. Keep children at least 6 feet apart.
- o Provide alternative education opportunities.
- Identify steps for dismissing students while providing educational services.
 - o Dismiss students and keep teachers in school to provide alternative learning.
 - o Dismiss staff and students and have teachers provide alternative learning.
- o Consider how to handle school lunches if students have been dismissed.

School and Child Care Closure

Rationale for School Closure - There are three primary rationale for closing schools and child care:

- (1) Limiting spread of the virus in the community,
- (2) Protecting vulnerable children, and
- (3) Reacting to staff shortages or children kept at home because of infections or parents' fears of infection.¹

1. Limiting the spread of the virus in the community

- a. Will result in longer closures to minimize social contact.
- b. E-learning options are important.
- c. Workforce issues due to parents work in conflict with childcare needs.
- d. Impacts education negatively.

2. Protecting vulnerable children

- a. Equality and discrimination issues.
- b. Protecting those who are immunocompromised.

3. Reacting to staff shortages, children kept at home because of infection, or children kept at home because of parents' fears of infection

3A. Staff Shortages (Staff infection). There may be differences based upon:

- a. Rural/urban.
- b. Big/little.
- c. Available substitute pool.

3B. Children kept at home because of infection

- a. Even one case may cause concern and trigger mass exodus.
- b. Will a suspected case be communicated to the school community and what will that communication look like?
- c. Hard to predict the what the reaction of parents will be.
- d. Contacts to infected individuals - siblings, family.

3C. Children kept at home due to parent fear

- a. Fear of child being exposed.
- b. Fear due to misinformation or lack of information.

- c. Fear of stigma.

Addressing parent fear

It is important to keep students and families informed of actions that the school and child care is taking, including the most up to date information regarding COVID-19 from reliable sources such as the Center for Disease Control, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, and your local public health department.

In rapidly changing health events and outbreaks such as COVID-19, there can be large amounts of incorrect or partially correct information that can add to stress and confusion as a parent/caregiver, student, or school staff. Providing current, accurate, and frequent updates can help reduce stress and fear.

Get the most up-to-date and accurate information at:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- CDPHE: <https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/2019-novel-coronavirus>
- CO HELP 303-389-1687 or 1-877-462-2911

Supporting students, families, and school and child care staff

In addition to providing information regarding school actions and the latest information regarding COVID-19, students, family, and staff can benefit from information regarding emotional support. Here are some resources that could be helpful.

- [Parent/Caregiver Guide to Helping Families Cope with the Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)
- [WHO Infographic Helping Children Cope](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists Helping Kids Cope](#)
- Colorado Crisis Services 1-844-493-TALK (8255) Text to Talk 38255

When to close a school or child care

It will be important to work closely with your local public health department as you begin considering closing school. You may close school when there is one confirmed case of COVID-19 among students or staff and should close when student absenteeism reaches 10% and/or 5% for school staff, or as directed by your local public health department.

How long to close a school or child care

Should be done in consultation with local public health

Consideration/challenges for when schools and child care are closed

- Children being fed - access to meals.
- Child protection issues - younger children unsupervised because parent(s) has to work.
- Children/youth congregating in other sites.
- Parent absenteeism from work in order to care for children.
- Children with special needs can have more difficulty learning when returning to school after extended absence.

Reference

¹ Klaiman et al. BMC Public Health 2011, 11:73 <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3039590/>

Resources:

- CDC Interim Guidance for School Administration:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>
- Fact sheets and posters:
<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1eZydLBynhD2jmvxl8jFRutagMdbor5qe>