

Emergency Plans and Procedures Best Practices for Schools

- Review, Update, and Implement Emergency Operations Plans (EOPs)
 - Ensure the plan includes strategies to reduce the spread of a wide variety of infectious diseases (e.g., seasonal influenza). Effective strategies build on everyday school policies and practices.
 - Ensure the plan emphasizes common-sense preventive actions for students and staff. For example, emphasize actions such as staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; cleaning frequently touched surfaces; and washing hands often.
 - Ensure handwashing strategies include washing with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Develop Information-sharing systems with partners.
 - Information-sharing systems can be used for day-to-day reporting (on information such as changes in absenteeism) and disease surveillance efforts to detect and respond to an outbreak.
 - Local health officials should be a key partner in information sharing.
- Monitor and plan for absenteeism
 - Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school among both students and staff.
 - Alert local health officials about large 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 symptoms of COVID-19).
 - Review attendance and sick leave policies. Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
 - 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.
- Establish procedures for students and staff who are sick at school
 - Establish procedures to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible.
 - Keep sick students and staff separate from well students and staff until they can leave.
 - Remember that schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.
 - Share resources with the school community to help families understand when to keep children home.
- Perform routine environmental cleaning
 - Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with the cleaners typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
 - Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students and staff before each use.
- Create communications plans for use with the school community
 - Include strategies for sharing information with staff, students, and their families.
 - Include information about steps being taken by the school or childcare facility to prepare, and how additional information will be shared.