

Coronavirus: A Guide for Schools

General Prevention Guidelines

The following recommendations are urged to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19):

- Wash hands often with soap, warm water, and disposable paper towels.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough with your elbow or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

School-Specific Recommendations

In addition to standard disease prevention procedures, the following recommendations are encouraged to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools:

- Keep a supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizer and sanitizing wipes.
- Avoid the use of water fountains.
- Opt for elbow bumps rather than handshakes or high-fives.
- Consider alternatives to physical education instead of contact sports and activities.
- Avoid the use of shared play spaces, such as sandboxes and ball pits.
- Prioritize cleanliness and discourage sharing of equipment during activities such as band.
- Sterilize playground and gym equipment often.
- Teach good hand-washing practices and implement frequently.
- Sterilize student desks, doorknobs, and other frequently touched and shared classroom items (i.e. staplers, pencil sharpeners) each day.
- When possible, encourage online assignment submissions instead of paper.
- Provide reminders in daily announcements about preventing the spread of germs and illnesses.
- Encourage children not to share personal items.

Recommendations for School Personnel

School personnel evaluating and in contact with students with symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) in schools should take the following precautions:

- Wear appropriate gloves and mask when it is reasonably anticipated that there may be hand contact with droplets and when handling or touching contaminated items or surfaces. Wash hands immediately or as soon as feasible after removing gloves.
- Never wash or decontaminate disposable gloves for reuse.
- Wear appropriate face and eye protection when splashes, sprays, spatters, or droplets pose a hazard to the eye, nose, or mouth.
- Quarantine students with symptoms until a parent arrives for early dismissal. Designate a quarantine area with limited foot traffic and away from other students.
- Protect personally identifiable student information in accordance with FERPA.
- Increase disinfection protocols.
- Stress importance of personnel and students to stay home if they are sick or have been caring for someone sick.

- Encourage staff to promote social distance by not overcrowding meeting spaces such as conference rooms and vestibules.
- Establish system of communication with parents for updates and reminders.
- Establish point of contact with your local health department and coordinate on reporting procedures and trends in absenteeism (including staff and school bus drivers).
- Coordinate with the Tennessee Department of Health on reporting procedures and trends in illness-related work absences.
- Monitor CDC website for any changes in status.
- Update student and staff contact information as well as emergency contact lists.
- Develop cross-training of essential personnel for continuity of operations.
- Encourage online communication rather than in-person parent and staff meetings when possible.
- Keep a record of students with symptoms and their movements (i.e. whether they rode the bus to school, attend before/after school programs) and be prepared to provide this information to the health department.

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.

Waiver and School Closure Guidance

- Each school in Tennessee must complete 180 days of classroom instruction. Schools that exceed the full 6½ hours of instructional time required by law by ½ hour daily for the full academic year are credited with the additional instructional time. The excess instructional time of up to 13 instructional days each year, may be applied toward meeting instructional time requirements missed due to dangerous or extreme weather conditions or serious outbreaks of illness.
- In the event of a natural disaster or serious outbreaks of illness affecting or endangering students or staff during a school year, the law authorizes the commissioner of education to waive for that school year the requirement of 180 days of classroom instruction
- We will be working with school districts on a case by case basis if the need arises.

Additional Resources

- Centers for Disease Control Coronavirus webpage: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/>
- Tennessee Department of Health: <http://www.tn.gov/health.html>
- TN Department of Health Coronavirus webpage: <http://www.tn.gov/health/cedep/ncov.html>
- TN Department of Health news page: <http://www.tn.gov/health/news/>