

COVID-19 Guidance FOR MA Schools

From Massachusetts Department of Public Health



Veronica Webb Barrett

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Dear Colleagues,

Guidance related to COVID-19 was sent last week to both school nurses and administrators. No new guidance has been released. The situation is changing rapidly, and likely much more rapidly than we could keep up with as far as providing written guidance. Therefore, it has been our recommendation since the beginning that schools/districts reach out to their local health department for the most up to date guidance, and if that resource is not available to you, you can reach out to the resources named in the January 24th guidance at the end of this newsletter.

For questions or additional guidance call the MDPH Epidemiology Line at 24 hours a day/7 days a week at 617-983-6800.

At this point schools/districts should be reviewing their pandemic response plans with community stakeholders. If you have questions regarding pandemic response plans, please refer to the resources listed in this newsletter. Please see materials in the "General Resources" below related to updating school response plans related to the threat of school closure.

School Health Unit staff and Regional School Nurse Consultants are currently being overwhelmed with emails and calls in regards to this outbreak. We will do our best to respond in a timely manner to all communications, but please consider the overall volume when considering who you will contact with questions. Be assured that we WILL communicate with you immediately any changes to guidance for schools from MDPH as this evolves.

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**SCHOOL NURSES LEAD HEALTH PROMOTION AND
DISEASE PREVENTION IN SCHOOLS:**

School nurses can decrease fears and promote prevention of COVID-19, the flu, and other illnesses. School nurses can continue to be proactive by advising students, families, and staff to:

- **Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.** Use a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes, then dispose of the tissue. When a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces or objects.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. [Find additional CDC resources on how to clean and disinfect schools.](#)
- **Wash hands for 20 seconds.** Washing hands often under clean, running water can help prevent the spread of germs. For more guidance see the [CDC: When and How to Wash Your Hands](#). If you cannot wash your hands, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60-95% alcohol.

School nurses should:

- **Provide factual updates, as needed, regarding flu rates in the area, COVID-19** and tips to help decrease public fears.
- **Consult with primary care providers, local, and state health departments** if they observe individuals with symptoms or circumstances that seem to match those related to COVID-19 exposure.

For More Information:

PLANNING GUIDELINES FOR ADMINISTRATORS FROM CDC

Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

GENERAL RESOURCES

- The U.S. Government's Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools ([REMS](#)) website is helpful for schools looking for assistance in preparing for and mitigating the damage from emergencies as far-ranging as school violence, natural disasters, disease outbreaks, fire, and accidents. Such resources include guidance on developing an emergency operations [plan](#), information on [psychological first aid for schools](#), and [technical assistance](#) including toolkits and training opportunities.
- The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (Ready.gov) has a very good emergency planning [website](#).
- The World Health Organization has additional resources to explore: [infection prevention and control](#) during health care when COVID-19 infection is suspected and [risk communication and community engagement](#) readiness and initial response for coronavirus.
- There have been [reports](#) from around the world about an increase in [anti-Asian](#) discrimination. These resources from Teaching Tolerance will help educators foster constructive dialogue with students and address bias incidents: [Speaking Up Against](#)

[Racism Around the New Coronavirus](#), [Let's Talk: Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students](#), [Speak Up at School: How to Respond to Everyday Prejudice, Bias and Stereotypes](#), [Responding to Hate and Bias at School. A Different Asian American Timeline](#) explores the history of racism in the Asian American experience.

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Currently, the February 24th memo from The Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services below regarding guidance for schools related to COVID-19 is the most recent approved guidance. **Updates related to school related responses will shared as they are released by MDPH.**

02/24/20 School COVID-19 Guidance Memo

doc COVID-19-Novel Coronavirus_for schools_022020_EHS-EOEApproved (1).doc

[Download](#)
73.7 KB

Kind Regards,
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