

# Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)

## Los Angeles County Department of Public Health Guidance for School Administrators (ECE, K-12)

Recent [global trends of the virus which causes coronavirus disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#) led the World Health Organization to declare COVID-19 a global pandemic (a worldwide spread of a new disease). As a result, the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (Public Health) is asking for your assistance to prevent and slow the spread of the novel (new) coronavirus in Los Angeles County.

Public Health is proactively taking steps to prevent the additional community transmission of COVID-19. We strongly recommend that all organizations review and update their emergency plans and consider ways to continue essential services if onsite operations must be reduced temporarily.

This document updates and summarizes our current recommendations to help prevent the spread of novel coronavirus in early childhood education and K-12 school-based settings. In addition, we encourage you to visit Public Health's Coronavirus webpage for resources including Guidance for Parents of Young Children, environmental health measures, and other Frequently Asked Questions:

<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/>.

### 1. What preventive measures should be taken right now, at an organizational level, to reduce the spread of COVID-19?

Recommendation	How to Implement
<b>Limit opportunities for ill students, staff, or visitors to enter, use, or remain on campus.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Continue to encourage and support staff, volunteers, and students to stay home when they are sick. Remind them to stay home and not come to school until they are free of fever for at least 72 hours without fever reducing medication.</li><li>• Conduct health screenings for staff, students and visitors on arrival (screening includes assessing for symptoms of respiratory illness and wherever possible, includes temperature checks). Staff, students and visitors should be reminded often not to come to school if they are ill, even with mild illness. Ensure plans account for the needs of students who are challenged by physical touch and/or significant changes in their daily routine.</li><li>• Prohibit public use of indoor facilities and no public events at schools.</li><li>• Communicate these measures to all who will be affected.</li></ul>
<b>Use and communicate the process that will be carried out when students or staff exhibit symptoms (e.g. fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms) while on campus.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Send home students and staff who present with a fever of 100.4°F or above and/or respiratory infection symptoms, immediately. Remind parents to update their emergency contact information as children who are not dropped off at school by a parent/caregiver (e.g. student walks, takes school bus, carpool, public transportation), will need to be picked up from school immediately.</li><li>• Separate symptomatic students or staff from others until they go home, preferably in a sick room through which others do not pass. If possible, once in the sick room, place a surgical mask on students with fever and cough as</li></ul>

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	<p>soon as possible. Due to their elevated risk, it is important to ensure plans account for the needs of students with complex medical needs and staff who are older adults.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete reporting forms requested by Public Health to facilitate potential outbreak investigations.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Use and communicate the criteria for excluding students/staff from school and allowing them to return to school.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exclude staff, students, and visitors for 14 days upon returning from travel to Italy, mainland China, South Korea, and Iran, as directed by CDC.</li> <li>• Remind staff, students, and visitors to stay home and not come to school until they are free of fever for at least 72 hours without fever reducing medication.</li> <li>• If someone in the student or staff member’s household is sick, they should:             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Maintain social distance (6 feet space) from sick household member(s) and returning travelers who are self-monitoring for 14 days.</li> <li>○ Attend classes as long as they are well/pass school entrance screening.</li> <li>○ Self-isolate at home at first sign of illness.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Do not require a healthcare provider’s note for employees or students who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work. Healthcare provider offices and medical facilities will be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Minimize interaction among large groups of students, staff, and visitors.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stagger activities such as recess or other breaks.</li> <li>• Discontinue buffet style food options (e.g. salad bars).</li> <li>• Have lunch and/or meals in classrooms; avoid sharing tables whenever possible. Close student stores.</li> <li>• Use technology for meetings.</li> <li>• Cancel and/or postpone large gatherings (e.g. 50 or more participants) such as assemblies, performances, mass celebrations, interschool activities, spectator attendance at sporting events, school open houses, and staff meetings.</li> <li>• Cancel school trips to external/public venues where there is exposure to crowds.</li> <li>• Restrict on campus visitors, including volunteers.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Implement physical measures and modify learning practices to limit the spread of respiratory illness.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Re-engineer classrooms to create social distance (6 feet space) between students’ desks and/or tables and chairs.</li> <li>• Modify circle time, work in pairs and other classroom activities to minimize very close contact among students and teachers.</li> </ul>



Recommendation	How to Implement
<b>Implement a tight regimen of personal/group hygiene and cleaning/disinfection measures.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide adequate supplies for good hygiene, including easy access to clean and functional handwashing stations, soap, paper towels, and alcohol-based hand sanitizer.</li> <li>Include frequent handwashing for 20 seconds (at the beginning of the school day, before and after meals, after outside play, after using the restroom, and before and after classroom activities that involve sharing supplies and materials) and after coughing and sneezing. For students under 6 years of age, handwashing should be supervised.</li> <li>Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as doorknobs, bannisters, countertops, toys, faucet handles, physical education equipment and manipulatives, and phones. Use the usual cleaning agents and follow the label directions.</li> </ul>
<b>Plan for the need to use alternative methods of instruction.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure availability of substitute teachers and other staff.</li> <li>Update or create plans for when to use alternate methods of instruction; make sure to include multiple methods that best match the capabilities of the teachers and the needs of the students.</li> </ul>
<b>Have a plan to communicate with your staff, students, and their families.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use all available communication channels to share critical health information with students and families, while working with Public Health to protect patient confidentiality.</li> <li>Remind students, staff, and families that Public Health will notify school administrators of any confirmed cases and possible exposures.</li> <li>Visit our website, <a href="http://publichealth.lacounty.gov">publichealth.lacounty.gov</a>, for accurate and updated information that can be used for your communications.</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure plans are in place for additional preventive measures that may become necessary.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See #2 and #3 below</li> </ul>

It is also important that all individuals continue to practice every day preventive measures regardless of the setting, including:

- Stay home when you are sick. Stay home for at least 72 hours after you no longer have a fever or symptoms of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Sing the Happy Birthday song to help know when it has been 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and then dispose of the tissue and clean your hands immediately. If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve, not your hands, to cover your coughs and sneezes.
- Limit close contact with people who are sick, and avoid sharing food, drinks, or utensils.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

**2. Other than the preventive measures listed above, what measures should our school take if one student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and exposes others at school?**

Recommendation	How to Implement
<b>Implement your plan to communicate with school staff, students, and families.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use all available communication channels to share critical health information with students and families, while working with Public Health to protect patient confidentiality.</li> </ul>
<b>Close the school and implement your plan to use alternative methods of instruction.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close the school for a period of time to be determined by Public Health based on the date(s) of exposure and the risk level; usually, this shall be for 14 days.</li> </ul>
<b>Minimize disruption of other critical services students and families receive while on campus.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement plans that provide access through an appropriate distribution point to pre-packaged meals for as many students as possible who qualify for free and reduced- cost meals.</li> <li>Identify strategies to continue school based medical and social services where possible for those students who require such support (e.g. children with chronic conditions and special needs).</li> <li>Follow Public Health guidance for your organization’s non-school-based activities (e.g. home visiting, first responders, cleaning and disinfecting)</li> </ul>
<b>Ensure plans are in place for additional preventive measures that may become necessary.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See #3 below</li> </ul>

**3. What additional measures should our school take if there is significant community transmission and/or many schools within a school district have students or staff who have tested positive for COVID-19?**

Increased community transmission of COVID-19 would indicate growing risk to the general public and that additional precautions may need to be taken to contain any local community transmission. In addition to the actions listed above, organizations should have a plan and be prepared to take these actions, if recommended by Public Health:

Recommendation	How to Implement
<b>Close schools across an entire district or region.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The length of time for school closures shall be based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by LAC DPH.</li> </ul>
<b>Implement additional measures to limit the spread of respiratory illness during school closures.</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Close and/or limit public access to other venues within the school district where there are communal gatherings, community events, public entertainment, and/or sporting events.</li> </ul>

We cannot ensure that there will not be any infection if we close all schools, neither can we guarantee that there will not be any infection by keeping schools open. If there is wide community spread, chances are some students may be infected. But we will certainly do our best to make schools one of the safest environments. Fortunately, current evidence observed from other nations experiencing significant community transmission of COVID-19 is that young children demonstrate some degree of resistance to infection and experience less severe and more mild illness when they do become ill. However, children experiencing even mild illness of COVID-19 can transmit the virus to others.

Closing school will disrupt many lives. We don't rule it out when required, but it is a major decision that will only be made after serious consideration. One thing to note is that even if all students stay at home, there is no guarantee against infection. Lots of infections happen at home. It is also unrealistic to expect older kids to stay at home. They will go out and inter-mingle.

We will continue to monitor the situation closely, in the best interest of our students. We are constantly reviewing our measures to protect our schools and students and update them based on the evolving situation and risk assessment.

### Know where to get reliable information

Continue encouraging staff and families to beware of scams, false news and hoaxes surrounding COVID-19. Accurate information, including announcements of new cases in LA County, will always be distributed by Public Health through press releases, social media, and our website. The website has more information on COVID-19 including FAQs, infographics and a guide to coping with stress, as well as tips on handwashing, and additional guidance documents targeting a large number of community sectors in addition to schools.

- Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH, County)
  - <http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/media/Coronavirus/> Social media: @lapublichealth
- The Los Angeles County Department of Mental Health
  - Access Center 24/7 Helpline (800) 854- 7771

### Other reliable sources of information include:

- California Department of Public Health (CDPH, State)
  - <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Immunization/nCOV2019.aspx>
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, National)
  - <http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/novel-coronavirus-2019.html>
- World Health Organization (WHO, International)
  - <https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus>

Additional information can be accessed at the [CDC's school guidance document](#).

Schools can also use those parts of the CDC's pandemic flu checklist ([schools k-12](#) / [childcare programs](#)), which are applicable for novel coronavirus to assess their preparedness.

If you have questions and would like to speak to someone, or need help finding medical care, call the Los Angeles County Information line 2-1-1 which is available 24/7.