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## COVID-19 Situation Summary for Schools *(update)*

The United States has experienced multiple (53 current) confirmed cases of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) as of February 25, 2020, including 2 in Illinois. This new virus poses a serious public health threat, but the immediate health risk from the virus to the general American public is still considered low at this time.

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends taking extra precautions at/near international airports. The CDC is conducting entry screenings of passengers on direct and connecting flights from China to five major airports: Atlanta (ATL), Chicago (ORD), Los Angeles, (LAX) New York city (JFK), and San Francisco (SFO). The CDC has deployed teams to support the ongoing investigations in Illinois and Washington. On January 23, 2020, the CDC issued a level 3 travel warning to avoid nonessential travel (the highest warning possible) for people visiting Hubei Province, China, which includes Wuhan.

Following in Q&A format are questions that we are fielding from clients with links to additional information:

### **Q: Are schools required to exclude students if they have recently traveled to China?**

**A:** Yes. On February 10, 2020, the Illinois Department of Public Health issued a guidance document that states: "Any student returning from mainland China on February 3, 2020 and onward should not attend school for 14 [calendar] days after the return date." These absences should be excused; no homebound instruction is required. The guidance document also recommends that family members of students should not attend work if they also traveled to mainland China.

### **Q: What resources are available for our staff and families?**

**A:** The [CDC COVID-19 home page](#) remains an excellent resource for schools and health care providers. It is advisable for school personnel (typically through the health office) to closely monitor student absences due to illness in the event that the IDPH or CDC requests this information. The currently known symptoms of COVID-19 include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

## Q: Are school staff required to report diagnoses of COVID-19 to public health officials?

**A:** Yes. The IDPH has classified COVID-19 as an “unusual case/cluster of cases that may indicate a public health hazard.” As such, school personnel are required to report a COVID-19 diagnosis to the IDPH within 3 hours of receiving notice of the diagnosis. Public health officials are similarly required to notify the IDPH, which typically happens first. School officials must also make the report to IDPH to ensure monitoring and support for school officials and students.

## Q: Must public health officials notify schools if a student/parent is diagnosed with COVID-19?




**A:** Yes. In situations where an illness is considered an outbreak or pandemic, the IDPH and the CDC are responsible for monitoring and notifying personnel in areas that the individual has frequented so as to alert the public. Public school officials typically receive the information directly from the family, physician and IDPH, or some combination of the three. In the unlikely event a student or community member is diagnosed with COVID-19, the school district will work directly with the IDPH and the CDC to notify staff, students and community members. This notification protocol is beyond the scope of this update but it will be similar to the 2009 H1N1 Influenza outbreak and 2018-2019 measles outbreaks.



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## Information for Illinois K-12 Schools Regarding 2019 Novel Coronavirus

### What is 2019 Novel Coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?

2019 Novel Coronavirus, or 2019-nCoV, is a new respiratory virus identified in December 2019 as the cause of an outbreak in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China. People who get sick with 2019-nCoV develop mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Illness can begin 2 to 14 days after an exposure. Although this virus likely emerged from an animal source, it can also spread from person-to-person. Spread from one person to another is thought to occur mainly via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Typically, with most respiratory viruses, people are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic.

The latest national situation summary updates, including the number of cases identified in the United States, are available on CDC's web page [2019 Novel Coronavirus, Wuhan, China](https://www.cdc.gov/media/releases/2020/s0205-nCoV-situation.html). State situation updates can be found at [DPH.ILLINOIS.GOV](https://www.idph.state.il.us/2019-nCoV).

### What is the health risk from 2019-nCoV in Illinois?

Currently, the health risk to the general public from 2019-nCoV remains low, both in the U.S. and in Illinois. The goal of the ongoing U.S. public health response is to detect new cases quickly and prevent community spread of 2019-nCoV. The coming days and weeks are likely to bring more confirmed cases of 2019-nCoV in the U.S. and globally, but strong public health measures now may blunt the impact of the virus.

### What special precautions do schools in Illinois need to take?

Due to recent acceleration of 2019-nCoV transmission across China and in accordance with current federal guidance, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) recommends the following:

- **Any student returning from mainland China on February 3, 2020 and onward should not attend school for 14 days after the return date.**
- Absences for this purpose should be excused.
- Family members of these students should not attend work if they also traveled to mainland China.

This interim guidance is effective as of February 3, 2020, and does not apply retrospectively to students who have been in China during the previous 14 days and are already in the U.S., or those being managed as part of a contact investigation.

**Students who returned from mainland China prior to February 3, 2020 can remain in school.** If a student who returned from mainland China before February 3, 2020 develops respiratory symptoms including fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, **report immediately** to your Local Health Department. **Please keep in mind there are other respiratory**



**viruses like influenza currently circulating in Illinois.** Call ahead before taking the student to a doctor's office or emergency department to prevent any potential spread.

The situation is rapidly changing, and we are monitoring it closely. Guidance will be updated as needed.

### **What are the latest public health measures?**

As airport screening procedures have changed, starting February 3, 2020, IDPH began receiving information on incoming travelers from all of China who may be at risk, and when appropriate instructing them to stay home from school and work, and monitoring them remotely. IDPH will be in communication with school administration about individual situations as needed.

### **If we have a student who has been ill at school and is now a person under investigation (PUI), what do we tell parents?**

In general, continue to follow your usual procedures for notification of parents/guardians whose students are ill at school. IDPH will follow up with schools who need more specific guidance.

### **Should we be concerned about classroom pets or other animals and 2019-nCoV?**

CDC recommends that people traveling to China avoid animals both live and dead, but there is no reason to think that any animals or pets in the United States might be a source of infection with this new coronavirus.

### **One of our students is an exchange student from China. Can they return home?**

IDPH recommends students **avoid travel to China**. The latest travel updates are available on CDC's web page [Traveler's Health](#).

### **How can schools prevent infections with 2019-nCoV and other respiratory diseases?**

There is currently no vaccine to prevent 2019-nCoV infection. As with any respiratory virus, students and school personnel can protect themselves and others by taking every day common sense actions:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.



IDPH **does NOT** recommend:

- the use of masks or gloves
- cancelling mass gatherings
- cancelling classes

**Are any special cleaning procedures needed?**

At this time, no special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning are necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Schools should follow standard processes for routine cleaning and disinfecting with an EPA-registered product. General infection control guidance is available at [www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol](http://www.cdc.gov/infectioncontrol).

**What should school-based health centers do to prevent the spread of 2019-nCov?**

If a student calls ahead with travel to China within the last 14 days and concerning symptoms, collect detailed history over the phone prior to deciding the location for triage. School-based health centers (SBHCs) should contact their Local Health Department immediately.

For more information, please visit [DPH.ILLINOIS.GOV](http://DPH.ILLINOIS.GOV) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).