



## DPH Information for Schools (K-12) Regarding Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID - 19)

With cases of Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID - 19) reported in several countries including the U.S., Delaware health officials are increasing monitoring efforts to identify potential cases. The Division of Public Health (DPH) has posted information on its website <https://dhss.delaware.gov/dhss/dph> and is sharing this information to provide details about its activities related to the outbreak, and guidance for schools (K-12).

While the available information suggests a low immediate health risk for the general public, DPH considers any new infectious disease a serious concern and are working with health care providers to promptly identify and evaluate any suspected cases. It is important to recognize that the current investigation and response are dynamic, and new information about the disease may impact the approach to this disease. DPH will keep you updated as the situation evolves.

Here is what you need to know about COVID - 19 for your school:

**Currently the risk to the general public is considered low.** While the number of cases in the U.S. is increasing, it is still considered a small number. There are no cases in Delaware, though we are aware that could change at any time.

Risk is based on exposure. As you know we are in the heart of flu and respiratory disease season, and with over four-thousand cases statewide, and seven flu-related deaths, most of the population is at greater risk of contracting seasonal influenza than coronavirus disease 2019. Those staff or students with recent travel (returning within the last 14 days) to any area of China, or those with contact with someone who has recent travel and is ill, have an increased risk for becoming ill.

Persons returning from Hubei Province China (including Wuhan), along with symptomatic persons returning from Mainland China, will be held at their port of entry under federal quarantine for a 14-day period. Asymptomatic (not sick) persons returning from mainland China, will be under Division of Public Health supervision for 14-days after returning. Those persons are asked to stay home from work/school during the 14-days, while self-monitoring for symptoms of COVID- 19 (fever, cough, shortness of breath).

DPH is not recommending exclusion from work/school of asymptomatic persons who arrived in the U.S. from China prior to February 3, 2020.

For staff and students without an associated travel risk, it should not be assumed that most respiratory illnesses are COVID-19. Symptoms of coronavirus disease 2019 are most similar to lower respiratory infections with patients having fever, cough, and



shortness of breath. While in some cases illnesses can be severe and require hospitalization, many individuals infected with 2019-nCoV recover by resting, drinking plenty of liquids and taking pain, and fever-reducing medications.

Any school administration or health care staff with questions should call the DPH Office of Infectious Disease Epidemiology 24/7 at **1-888-295-5156**.

When a new disease is circulating, it's natural for people to ask what they can do to protect themselves and their families. The best guidance at this point is to advise patients to take the same precautions recommended for avoiding colds and flu:

- staff and students should stay home when they are sick;
- teach students to cover their coughs and sneezes with tissues, or to cough or sneeze into their inner elbow;
- practice good hand washing with soap and water as often as possible, and if soap and water are not available, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers;
- encourage flu vaccination among both staff and students;
- clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces in classrooms.

Other faculty or parents who have concerns about their, or their families' personal exposure risks should contact their health care provider.