

School Preparedness and Planning for COVID-19

Updated 03-11-20

The most important thing for schools to do now is **plan and prepare** for the possibility of larger-scale community outbreaks.

Based on CDC guidance, childcare and K-12 school administrators can take steps to help stop or slow the spread of COVID-19:

[Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans \(EOPs\).](#)

Ensure that the plans:

- **Include strategies to reduce the spread of a wide variety of infectious diseases** (e.g., seasonal influenza). Effective strategies build on everyday school policies and practices.
- **Include strategies to maintain critical services outside of instruction** such as free and reduced lunch programs, health services, needs of students experiencing homelessness, and/or other services for students who are medically fragile. This is consistent with the Washington state mandate issued on March 11, 2020.
- **Emphasize basic health practices for students and staff**, such as staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; cleaning frequently touched surfaces; and washing hands often.
- **Ensure that students and staff can wash hands** with soap and water or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- **Monitor and plan for absenteeism.**
 - Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school among both students and staff.
 - Review attendance and sick leave policies. Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
 - Discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives.
 - Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.
 - Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning.
- **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.
- **Develop protocol for routine environmental cleaning.**

- Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with the cleaners typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students and staff before each use.
- **Create communications plans for use with the school community.**
 - Include strategies for sharing information with staff, students, and their families.
 - Include information about steps being taken by the school or childcare facility to prepare, and how additional information will be shared.
- **Review CDC [guidance](#)** to identify any additional strategies the school can use, given its role as an employer.

Planning Resources:

[Resources for K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs](#), CDC

[School Resources for COVID-19](#), Washington State Department of Health

[Emergency preparedness and response resources for schools](#), Washington Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

[Infectious disease planning resources](#), Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center

[Germ prevention strategies](#) and information on [reducing the spread of illness in childcare settings](#), American Academy of Pediatrics:

Childcare Planning Resources:

Seattle Emergency Management: www.seattle.gov/emergency-management/prepare/childcare-provider

Public Health Child Care Program: www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/child-teen-health/child-care-health/emergency-preparedness.aspx