

SCHOOL DECISIONS RESPONDING TO COVID-19

CDC interim guidance for
Administrators of US K-12 Schools and
Childcare Programs



OKLAHOMA
Education



CDC Clarification of Mitigation Strategies

- Strategies should be based on levels of community transmission and presence of COVID-19 cases within the school.
- Schools, in partnership with local health departments, can play an important role in slowing spread of COVID-19 and ensuring students and staff have safe and healthy learning environments.
- All school-based strategies should be made locally and in collaboration with local health officials.

Overview

- School-based strategies are appropriate for:
 - Event cancellations
 - Social distancing measures
 - School dismissal/closure
- Strategies should be determined with local health officials, who can assess level of community transmission.
- Information about levels of transmission are available in CDC's [framework for mitigation](#).

Overview - 2

- Schools play an important role in communicating accurate information about the disease and potential transmission in the school community.
 - Collaborate, share information, review plans with local health officials.
 - School plans should:
 - be designed to complement community mitigation strategies to protect high-risk populations **and** the healthcare system
 - minimize disruptions to learning and protect students/staff from social stigma and discrimination
 - build on everyday practices (hand hygiene, monitoring absences, etc.) that include strategies for before, during and after possible outbreak

School Decision Tree – Phased Approach

- Preparedness Phase – no community transmission
- Minimal to moderate community transmission
- Substantial community transmission
- When a confirmed case has entered a school (regardless of community transmission)

School Decision Tree

All Schools Regardless of Community Spread



Confirmed person with COVID-19 in building?



Assess Risk



Short (potential 2-5 day) Building Dismissal to Clean/Disinfect/Contact Trace in consultation with local health officials

No Community Spread

- Prepare
- Teach and reinforce healthy hygiene
- Develop information sharing systems
- Intensify cleaning and disinfection
- Monitor for absenteeism
- Assess group gatherings and events
 - consider postponing non-critical gathering and events
- Require sick students and staff stay home
- Establish procedures for someone becoming sick at school



Monitor changes in community spread

Minimal to Moderate OR Substantial Community Spread

Is community spread...



Minimal to Moderate?



- Coordinate with local health officials
- Implement multiple social distancing strategies for gatherings, classrooms and movement through building
- Consider ways to accommodate needs of children and families at high risk



Substantial?



- Coordinate with local health officials
- Implement multiple social distancing strategies for gatherings, classrooms and movement through building **WITH EXTENDED SCHOOL CLOSURES**
- Consider ways to accommodate needs of children and families at high risk

Preparedness Phase

Preparedness Phase - No Community Transmission

- Review, update and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs).
 - Include strategies to reduce spread of infectious disease, including seasonal flu, continuing education, meal programs and other related services.
 - Emphasize everyday prevention– staying home when sick, covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning frequently touched surfaces, frequent hand-washing.
 - Reference key resources when reviewing, updating and implementing the EOP.
 - [Guidance on developing high-quality EOPs](#)
 - [Role of school districts in developing high-quality EOPs](#)
 - Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center [website](#)

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Develop information-sharing systems with partners.
 - Use for day-to-day reporting and detection/responses to an outbreak
 - Consider local health officials key partners in information-sharing
- Teach/reinforce healthy hygiene practices.
 - Train staff so they can teach students.
 - Wash with soap and water for 20 seconds after bathroom visits, before eating and after blowing nose, coughing or sneezing.
 - If soap and water not available, use sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Use free hand-washing resources.
 - [Health promotion materials](#)
 - [Proper handwashing technique](#)
 - [Tips for families to help children develop good handwashing habits](#)
- Ensure adequate supplies are available.
 - Soap
 - Paper towels
 - Hand sanitizer (at least 60% alcohol)
 - Tissue

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Intensify cleaning and disinfection.
 - Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects.
 - Include those not frequently cleaned (doorknobs, light switches, sink handles, countertops).
 - Provide EPA-registered disposable wipes to teachers and staff.
 - Ensure adequate supplies are available to support cleaning practices.

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Monitor and plan for absenteeism.
 - Review absenteeism patterns of students and staff.
 - Alert local health officials about large increases in absenteeism, especially if due to respiratory illnesses.
 - Review attendance and sick leave policies and encourage staying home when sick. Be as flexible as possible with staff who must stay home to care for ill family members.
 - Discourage perfect attendance awards/incentives.
 - Identify critical job functions and positions and cross-train staff.
 - Determine the level of absenteeism that will disrupt teaching and learning.

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Assess group gatherings and events and consider postponing those that are non-critical.
 - Keep a record of all upcoming gatherings and large events and give special consideration to those that put students, staff and families in close proximity to others who may be from communities with confirmed cases of COVID-19.
 - Consider, in collaboration with local health officials, whether events should be canceled.

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Require sick students and staff to stay home and establish procedures for those who become sick at school.
 - Establish procedures to send sick students and staff home.
 - Separate those with symptoms of respiratory illness from other students and staff until they can leave school.
 - Schools are not expected to screen students or staff for COVID-19. This is the province of local health officials.
 - Share [resources](#) with the school community to help families understand when children should stay home.

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Create and test communications plans.
 - Develop strategies for information-sharing with staff, students and families.
 - Include information about steps the school is taking to prepare for COVID-19 and how future information will be shared.
 - Test communication capacity and restate steps staff, students and families can take to stay healthy and guidance for staying home if sick.

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- Review [CDC guidance](#) for businesses and employers.
- Consider sharing additional guidance, as needed.
 - [State](#) and [local](#) health officials
 - CDC fact sheets
 - [What you need to know about COVID-19](#)
 - [What to do if you are sick with COVID-19](#)
 - [Stop the spread of germs help prevent spread of respiratory viruses like COVID-19](#)

Preparedness Phase (continued)

- [CDC information on COVID-19 and children](#)
- [CDC Disease Information for Travel](#)
- [CDC FAQ for travelers](#)

Minimal to Moderate Transmission

When There Is Minimal to Moderate Community Transmission

- Continue using strategies implemented when there was no community transmission.
- Coordinate with local health officials.
- Implement multiple social distancing strategies.
 - Cancel field trips, assemblies and large gatherings.
 - Cancel or modify classes where students will be in very close contact (for PE or choir classes, for example, teachers could come to classrooms).

Minimal to Moderate Transmission (continued)

- Increase space between desks and turn desks to face one direction to reduce potential for transmission.
- Avoid mixing students in common areas.
 - Serve breakfast and lunch in classrooms.
 - Restrict hallway use.
 - Stagger bathroom visits and playground use.
- Stagger arrival and/or dismissal time.
- Reduce congestion in the office and the health office.
- Limit nonessential visitors (classroom volunteers, guest speakers, etc.).

Minimal to Moderate Transmission (continued)

- Limit cross-school transfer for special programs.
 - For example, if students are brought from multiple schools for robotics or academic teams or musical practices or competitions, consider using distance learning.
- Consider how to accommodate the needs of children, staff and families at risk for serious illness from COVID-19.
- Use this [CDC publication](#) to learn more about social distancing.

Confirmed Case Has Entered a School

When a Confirmed Case Has Entered a School (regardless of community transmission)

- Immediately notify local health officials and work with them to determine course of action.
- Dismiss students and most staff for 2-5 days so local health and school/district officials can determine appropriate next steps.
 - Local health officials' recommendations for scope and duration of closures will be made on a case-by-case basis.

Confirmed Case in School (continued)

- Cancel all extracurricular activities, afterschool programs and events.
- Discourage staff, students and families from gathering or socializing, including at childcare facilities, restaurants, malls or friends' homes.
- Coordinate with local health officials to communicate with staff, families and students about closure and potential exposure.
 - Communication should align with school emergency operations plan.
 - Include messaging to counter potential discrimination and [stigma](#).
 - Adhere to confidentiality of students and staff as outlined in the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.

Confirmed Case in School (continued)

- Clean and disinfect thoroughly.
 - Close areas used by individuals with COVID-19 and wait as long as practical – 24 hours if possible – to clean and disinfect to minimize exposure. Open outside windows and doors to increase air circulation.
 - Appropriate staff should clean and disinfect all areas (offices, bathrooms, common areas) used by the individual with the virus, focusing on frequently touched surfaces.
 - If dirty, clean surfaces with detergent or soap prior to disinfection.

Confirmed Case in School (continued)

- Use common EPA-registered household disinfectants for cleaning.
 - Consult a list of [EPA-approved products](#) that can be used to disinfect the COVID-19 virus.
 - Diluted household bleach may be used if appropriate for a given surface.
 - Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and ventilation.
- Consult [CDC information on cleaning and disinfecting](#).

Confirmed Case in School (continued)

- Make decisions about extending school closure.
 - With local health officials, determine which, if any, staff members should remain in the school during school closure and for what purpose.
 - School administrators should collaborate closely with local health officials to make closure and cancellation decisions.
 - School administrators should seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to school.

Confirmed Case in School (continued)

- Implement strategies to continue education and supports for students.
 - Ensure continuity of education.
 - Review and implement continuity plans as feasible and appropriate.
 - Determine, with district officials and other relevant state and local partners:
 - If a waiver is needed for required instructional hours/school days
 - How or if to implement and deliver online instruction
 - How to triage technical issues if needed
 - How to encourage adult supervision if distance learning is implemented
 - How to deal with potential inequity of access for distance learning

Confirmed Case in School (continued)

- Ensure continuity of meal programs.
 - Consider ways to distribute food to students.
 - If community spread of COVID-19 occurs, design strategies to avoid distribution in large gatherings and consider “grab and go” options or meal delivery.
- Consider alternatives for providing students essential medical and social services.

Substantial Community Transmission

When There Is Substantial Community Transmission

- Continue using strategies implemented when there was no, minimal or moderate community transmission.
- Continue to coordinate with local health officials.
- Consider extended school closures of longer than two weeks.
 - In event of school closure, cancel extracurricular activities, afterschool programs and large events (assemblies, sports, etc.)
 - Implement strategies to ensure continuity of education where possible and continuation of meal programs and other essential services.