



CITY OF SAN ANTONIO

March 2, 2020

Dear School Administrator:

Metro Health is taking steps to prevent the introduction and spread of [novel coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#) in our community. Schools play an important role in this effort. You can help by sharing the information below with your staff, students and parents:

Maintain perspective. The United States has seen 16,000 deaths from influenza so far this flu season, compared to 1 from COVID-19 as of this writing. San Antonio has no identified cases of community transmission to date. Among people infected with COVID-19, only 20% become seriously ill.

Take simple actions to slow the spread of respiratory infections and protect our community members who are at higher risk, such as the elderly and those with underlying health conditions. Unlike with flu, children are largely spared from serious illness. Stay home when sick, wash your hands often, avoid touching your face, cover your cough with your arm or a tissue, and disinfect surfaces.

Fight misinformation and bullying. Avoid spreading the stigma that this is a disease limited to one type of people. Know that people released from quarantine or isolation do not pose a risk of infection to other people. Respond immediately to reported verbal or physical abuse, including on social media.

Additional information and guidance for our schools:

- Be prepared: Review and update your Emergency Operations Plan. Monitor and plan for student absenteeism. The Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) recently posted guidance and resources for schools:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>.
Your plan could include [social distancing practices for schools](#).
- Know the symptoms of novel coronavirus infection: fever (100.4F or more) and a dry cough; not a runny nose, typically. Over time, shortness of breath. Only people who are seriously ill are candidates for COVID-19 testing at this time.
- Actively encourage sick employees to stay home. Employees who become sick at work should be sent home as soon as possible, and other employees should keep a 6-foot distance from them. We encourage employers to offer paid sick leave, and not to require a return-to-work note from a healthcare provider for acute respiratory illness. (Medical facilities may be extremely busy and unable to provide such documentation in a timely way.) Promote telemedicine urgent care, if that is an option for your employees.
- Monitor and plan for staff absenteeism. Absenteeism may arise because of sick employees, because healthy employees are caretakers for sick family members, because parents stay home with their children during school closures, or because a staffer was in close contact with a sick



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person. We encourage schools to cross-train staff in preparation for absenteeism and consider trigger points for suspending some services.

- If any students and staff are asked by Metro Health to self-quarantine, we encourage schools to support them by permitting absences, providing study materials so students can work from home, and delivering sack lunches if a student is eligible for school lunch.
- Disseminate culturally and linguistically appropriate information to employees about your preparedness and response plan.
- Staff or students planning to travel should review [CDC: Travel Health Notices](#) and keep an eye on the news for updates on this evolving situation.
- We are in cold and flu season. COVID-19 symptoms are similar to these more common infections—it is far more likely that anyone with respiratory symptoms is suffering from a cold or flu. Schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. Do not make determinations of risk based on race or country of origin.
- At this time, we are not making a recommendation to cancel events or extracurricular activities.
- We know there may be specific situations that arise where you have questions. We will have a hotline in a few days, **210-207-5579**—please call us so we can work together to determine the best course of action.

For additional COVID-19 resources including posters and fact sheets in multiple languages, please visit: sanantonio.gov/Health/News/Alerts/CoronaVirus and dshs.texas.gov/coronavirus/.

Thank you for everything you do for our community, and for partnering with us for a healthy San Antonio.

Sincerely,

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