

Novel Coronavirus: Schools and Child Care

Updated 3/18/20

What steps can schools and child care centers to help slow or stop the spread of novel coronavirus?

Steps to prevent spread of flu and the common cold will also help prevent coronavirus. *Remember, schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If your community or school has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow-up on next steps.*

Child care providers and centers should work to follow White House's guidance (from March 16) limiting social gatherings to no more than ten (10) person guidance. These establishments should use common sense when applying the guidance with the goal of reducing class sizes and increasing space between children. This is not a mandate. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has posted this guidance and will continue to update it at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus>.

Note: The Douglas County Health Department has issued stricter, legally enforceable measures banning groups of more than ten (10) individuals and gatherings under ten (10) people where six (6) feet of space cannot be maintained between individuals. Visit <https://www.douglascountyhealth.com/> for more information.

Recommended Guidance

- Family Child Care Homes I and II: As much as possible, all care should be limited to 10.
- School Age Only Child Care: As much as possible, all care should be limited to 10 children in care. For larger programs, group size can be 10 children per classroom.
- Child Care Center: As much as possible, all care should be limited to 10 children in care. For larger centers, group size can be 10 children per classroom.
- Preschool: As much as possible, all care should be limited to 10 children in care. For larger preschools, group size can be 10 children per classroom.

Working with staff and students:

Staff or students should stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible. Consider halting the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives.

Encourage students and staff to:



Wash their hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.



Cover their nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.

Ensure frequent cleaning and disinfection of frequently touched objects and surfaces.



When possible, provide disposable wipes for commonly used surfaces like keyboards, remotes, and desks can be wiped down by students and staff before each use. The EPA has put out a list of products for use against novel coronavirus. This list can be found at:

https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf.

Communication with community partners:

Work regularly with your local health officials and health department. If you are not sure who your local health department is please visit www.dhhs.ne.gov/lhd to find out.

Share age-appropriate resources and information with students, staff, and their families from reputable sources like Nebraska DHHS, CDC, and World Health Organization (WHO) to promote actions listed above and make them easily accessible.

Sharing resources with families can help them understand when and why it is important to keep ill students at home.

Monitoring and Planning:

Monitor school absenteeism and review usual patterns of absenteeism.

Report weekly absenteeism to your local health department.

Report clusters of illness to your local health department.

Review, update, and implement your school's emergency operations plans. *Plans already developed for other respiratory illnesses like influenza may be easily updated for novel coronavirus.*

Plans should include strategies to prevent or reduce the spread of a variety of infectious diseases and should build on everyday policies and practices.

Plans should also emphasize common-sense preventative actions like those listed in the "Working with staff and students" section above.

Determine at what level of absenteeism (for both students and staff) will disrupt teaching and learning.

Establish a plan if staff or students become ill at school or the child care facility.

If possible, keep sick students or staff separate from well students or staff until they can leave.

Share plans with community partners such as local health officials, health department, and emergency management.



Explore and consider planning strategies that can help limit face-to-face contact when possible. These strategies can include options like:



Increasing space between students in classrooms.

Making attendance and sick-leave policies more flexible.

Modify, postpone, or cancel large school events (*if community transmission is found in your area – please contact and work with your local health department*).



Temporarily dismissing students attending schools or child care facilities (*if community transmission is found in your area – please contact and work with your local health department*).

For more information please visit:

www.dhhs.ne.gov/coronavirus

www.cdc.gov/COVID19

<https://www.education.ne.gov/publichealth/>