



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
GRETCHEN WHITMER  
GOVERNOR



## **MEMORANDUM**

DATE: February 28, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents  
Public School Academy Directors  
Nonpublic School Administrators  
Public Health Officers  
Public Library Directors

FROM: Dr. Michael F. Rice, Superintendent of Public Instruction,  
Michigan Department of Education  
Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, Chief Medical Executive and Chief Deputy for  
Health, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Updated Guidance

Currently, the State of Michigan has no confirmed cases of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, but the state is closely monitoring the situation as knowledge evolves daily. Today, Governor Whitmer announced the activation of the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) where state, local, and federal agencies will coordinate statewide readiness and communication related to COVID-19. The Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) will continue actively preparing, monitoring, and coordinating response activities through the SEOC.

At this time, the health risk to the general public of Michigan from COVID-19 remains low, but schools and public libraries can take commonsense precautions to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Person-to-person spread of COVID-19 appears to spread via respiratory transmission. Symptoms are similar to those of influenza (e.g., fever, cough, and shortness of breath). The current outbreak is occurring during a time of year when respiratory illnesses from influenza and other viruses are highly prevalent.

For schools, we all need to do what we can to keep students and staff engaged in the learning process while mitigating the spread of infections. We strongly recommend that schools and school districts partner with their local health departments to:

- Report influenza-like activity, absenteeism, and potential school dismissals.
- Educate students and the community about COVID-19.

(more)

Other recommendations for schools, public libraries, and public health agencies include:

- Educating students, parents, library patrons, and staff regarding preventative hygiene practices including:
  - Remain at home if you are sick and avoid close contact with people who are sick.
  - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
  - Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are unavailable.
  - Cover cough with a tissue or sleeve. Provide adequate supplies within easy reach, including tissues and no-touch trash cans.
  - Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces.
- Separate sick students and staff from others until they can go home. When feasible, identify a "sick room" through which others do not regularly pass.
- Examine existing contracts for any employee issues or stipulations if school is dismissed or if staff are asked to stay home if they are ill.
- Review school curriculum and ensure plans are adaptable and flexible to ensure the required hours of instruction are completed.
- Investigate how your meal programs and after-school programs may be affected if you have to dismiss a school in your district or cancel large gatherings of individuals for sporting events, concerts, or celebrations.
- Schools should engage directly with their local health departments in preparing parental communications.
- Encourage influenza vaccines to help avoid other seasonal respiratory illness.
- Review additional documentation from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The CDC has developed guidance for child care programs, K-12 schools, and colleges/universities. Those documents are available at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>

Decisions to exclude a student or staff member, or to close schools altogether, must be taken on a case-by-case basis, in coordination with local health departments. These decisions are local in nature and could vary from district to district or school to school.

MDHHS has developed a COVID-19 website located at [michigan.gov/coronavirus](https://michigan.gov/coronavirus). It is updated regularly with the most current available information. We encourage you to visit the website for tools to assist you with your preparations.

We will continue to share with you as more information becomes available. Thank you for all you do to keep Michigan schools and communities safe.

cc: Education Alliance  
Robert Gordon, Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services