

February 26, 2020

Dear Abington School Community,

I write to provide you with information regarding Abington School District's preparations related to the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) so that you may remain as informed as possible and take steps so your families and our school community remain safe from illness. Abington School District staff are receiving information as it is made available through the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Pennsylvania Department of Health. The websites below contain the up-to-date information that we monitor. We consult with the Montgomery County Health Department and our School District Physician in order to keep our students healthy and minimize the potential for the spread of illness.

I also want to share with you some of the prevention efforts that we will implement. The Facilities Department will be increasing cleaning and disinfecting routines in all of our schools. The Health Services Department will be developing lessons for all students on preventing the spread of germs and illness through proper hygiene; e.g, how to properly wash hands, covering coughs, and avoiding sharing personal items. Additionally, posters from the CDC will be hung in the schools to support awareness of this information.

The Abington School Board Policy Statement regarding: School Emergency Operations Plan addresses the district's response in the event of a pandemic that would require that students remain at school or require schools to be closed in order to reduce the spread of illness. Please see this document at the following address:

<https://www.abington.k12.pa.us/policies/media/sites/policies/BUILDINGS-AND-GROUNDS/SCHOOL-EMERGENCY-OPERATIONS-PLAN-BOARD-POLICY-STATEMENT.pdf>

There are two documents attached to this letter. One is from the Pennsylvania Department of Health that is specific for K-12 schools and was created on February 6, 2020. The other document is a fact sheet from the CDC that was created on February 21, 2020. I will send additional information as there are updates.

We look forward to seeing your children healthy and happy every day in our schools.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey S. Fecher, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

Pennsylvania Department of Health:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

Attachments

Abington School District is committed to complying fully with all Federal and state laws banning discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin/ethnicity, veteran status, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity/expression, or religion with regard to instructional programs, extracurricular activities, and employment practices. For more information see the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act at the following: www.phrc.state.pa.us. Any person who believes they are a victim of discrimination by the school district should refer the matter to the attention of the building principal or area supervisor. If the matter is not resolved satisfactorily, it should be brought to the attention of the Superintendent of Schools. The following people have been designated to handle inquiries regarding the nondiscrimination policies:

Director of Student Services
Director of Human Resources

970 Highland Avenue, Abington, PA 19001
970 Highland Avenue, Abington, PA 19001

215-881-2505
215-881-2509

BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common throughout the world. These viruses can live in animals, such as camels, cats and bats, and at times, evolve and infect people, before spreading through human to human contact. Human coronaviruses spread just like the flu or a cold—through the air by coughing or sneezing; through close personal contact, like touching or shaking hands; by touching an object or surface with the viruses on it; and occasionally, through fecal contamination. This has occurred previously with the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreaks.

WHAT SHOULD SCHOOLS DO?

Travelers from mainland China who have returned to the United States after being in China within the **last 14 days** are advised to (at minimum) self-monitor for fever, cough and shortness of breath and stay home avoiding group settings including work and school.

Travelers from Hubei Province, who have returned to the United States after being in China within the **last 14 days** are advised to stay home and avoid contact with others and contact 1-877-PA-HEALTH (**1-877-724-3258**).

Travelers who develop symptoms should **avoid contact with others** and contact 1-877-PA-HEALTH (**1-877-724-3258**) to discuss their symptoms and recent travel history.

We encourage schools to support students who may be quarantined by allowing for leniency in absenteeism from classes and extra-curricular activities.

WHAT IF WE HAVE A STUDENT WHOSE HEALTH IS BEING MONITORED?

If a student becomes a patient under investigation, schools should continue to follow usual procedures for notification of parents/guardians whose children are ill at school. Schools should also work with their local health department regarding notification.

PREVENTIVE MEASURES

The department encourages schools to increase education on ways to protect yourself from illnesses such as the cold, flu and also the coronavirus:

- **Cover** any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, do not use your hands!
- **Clean** surfaces frequently, such as countertops, light switches, cell phones and other frequently touched areas. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- **Contain**- if you are sick, stay home until you are feeling better.

RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

For information on what to do if you are sick, visit <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/sick-with-2019-nCoV-fact-sheet.pdf>

The latest information on the coronavirus in the U.S. and worldwide can be found on the [CDC website](#)

What you need to know about coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)

What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

Can people in the U.S. get COVID-19?

COVID-19 is spreading from person to person in China, and limited spread among close contacts has been detected in some countries outside China, including the United States. At this time, however, this virus is NOT currently spreading in communities in the United States. Right now, the greatest risk of infection is for people in China or people who have traveled to China. Risk of infection is dependent on exposure. Close contacts of people who are infected are at greater risk of exposure, for example health care workers and close contacts of people who are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19. CDC continues to closely monitor the situation.

Have there been cases of COVID-19 in the U.S.?

Yes. The first case of COVID-19 in the United States was reported on January 21, 2020. The current count of cases of COVID-19 in the United States is available on CDC's webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-in-us.html>.

How does COVID-19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 probably emerged from an animal source, but now it seems to be spreading from person to person. It's important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some diseases are highly contagious (like measles), while other diseases are less so. At this time, it's unclear how easily or sustainably the virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading between people. Learn what is known about the spread of newly emerged coronaviruses at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>.

What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- fever
- cough
- shortness of breath



What are severe complications from this virus?

Many patients have pneumonia in both lungs.

How can I help protect myself?

The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses. These include

- 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 not available.

If you are sick, to keep from spreading respiratory illness to others, you should

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

What should I do if I recently traveled to China and got sick?

If you were in China within the past 14 days and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, you should seek medical care. Call the office of your health care provider before you go, and tell them about your travel and your symptoms. They will give you instructions on how to get care without exposing other people to your illness. While sick, avoid contact with people, don't go out and delay any travel to reduce the possibility of spreading illness to others.

Is there a vaccine?

There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes COVID-19.

Is there a treatment?

There is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID-19. People with COVID-19 can seek medical care to help relieve symptoms.