

Guidelines for School Closings

In Response to COVID-19 Closures



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The Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) is a worldwide pandemic. There is a role for school closure in response to school-based cases of COVID-19 for isolation, decontamination, contact tracing and mitigation efforts that impacts both the spread of the disease and healthcare measures. Risk control guidelines are included below.

We are continuing to monitor the evolving situation and recommend you follow guidelines issued by healthcare and government officials, like the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (**CDC**) and the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (**OSHA**). The recommendations below are our interpretation of the latest guidelines.

Overall Goals for Closing

- Reduce illness and death from an outbreak of COVID-19.
- Minimize damage to student learning and the local economy that could ensue from weeks-long school closures.

Recommended Guidelines for Closing

- Educate students, staff and families about how to reduce the spread of the virus.
- Prepare teachers and other essential personnel to continue your schools' education mission in the event that campuses must close.
- Schools should develop policies for worker protection.
 - Encourage your staff and/or community members to protect their personal health.
 - Post the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 – fever, cough and shortness of breath – that are available from the **CDC**.
 - Encourage people to stay home when sick.
 - Clean surfaces that are frequently touched, such as shared desks, countertops, kitchen areas, electronics, and doorknobs.
 - Temporarily discontinue events and meetings that will result in close contact.
- Schools should educate staff and workers performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up activities to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and provide instructions on what to do if they develop symptoms within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus.
- Schools should provide training to all cleaning staff on-site prior to providing cleaning tasks.
 - Training should include when to use personal protective equipment (PPE), what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.



- Schools should ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with **OSHA's Hazard Communication standard 29 CFR 1910.1200**.
- In addition, review OSHA's standard on **Bloodborne Pathogens 29 CFR 1901.1030**, including proper disposal of regulated waste, and their **General Requirements for PPE 29 CFR 1910.132**.
- Staff should immediately notify their supervisor and the local health department if they develop symptoms of COVID-19.

Your Emergency Plan

Review, update and implement your Emergency Plan. This should be done in collaboration with local health departments and other relevant partners. Focus on the components, or annexes, of the plans that address infectious disease outbreaks.

- Include strategies to reduce the spread of a wide variety of infectious diseases (e.g., COVID-19, seasonal influenza). This includes strategies for social distancing and school dismissal that may be used to stop or slow the spread of infectious disease. The plan should also include strategies for continuing education, meal programs, and other related services in the event of school dismissal.
- Identify everyday preventive actions for students and staff. For example, emphasize actions such as staying home when sick, appropriately covering coughs and sneezes, cleaning frequently touched surfaces, and washing hands often.
- Outline guidelines for non-closure social distancing (e.g., staggering recess, canceling assemblies and inter-school events) dismissals, event cancellations, and other social distancing measures.

Considerations during Closure

Provide digital and distance learning for remote academic support (e.g., tele-ed), alternatives for school-based meals, and other services (such as behavioral and mental health services) for economically and physically vulnerable children. Supporting families for whom telework and paid sick leave is not available and ensuring that high-risk individuals continue to be protected must be addressed. Special consideration must also be given for healthcare workers so that school closures do not impact their ability to work.

Keeping Facilities Open

During school dismissals (after cleaning and disinfection), childcare programs and schools may stay open for staff members (unless ill) while students stay home.

- Keeping facilities open allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning, and allows other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts. Decisions on which, if any, staff should be allowed in the school should be made in collaboration with local health officials.
- Administrators should seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to schools, and what additional steps are needed for the school community. In addition, students and staff who are healthy, but are caring for or sharing a home with someone with a case of COVID-19 should follow instructions from local health officials to determine when to return to school.

- Childcare and school administrators should work in close collaboration and coordination with local health officials to make dismissal and large event cancellation decisions. Schools are not expected to make decisions about dismissal or canceling events on their own. School dismissals and event cancellations may be extended if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., geographic scope, duration) may change as the local outbreak situation evolves.
- Ensure that school security is considered by locking facility buildings and gates, confirming that fencing complies with the requirements for educational facilities and making sure video surveillance is operational to help with site security during school closures.
- Continue following infrastructure maintenance protocol established by the Facilities Maintenance Department and routine monitoring of school buildings and resources by staff.

For more helpful and up-to-date information regarding COVID-19, please visit our [Pandemic Information Hub](#).

www.ajg.com/pandemic

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