



CLIENT ALERT
March 10, 2020

PLAN AND PREPARE FOR CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)

It is important to educate your staff, students, and school community on the steps to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 and to review and update existing pandemic plans and strategies.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reports that COVID-19 is transmitted person-to-person and can present mild to severe respiratory illnesses. Symptoms include fever, cough and difficulty breathing which may appear two to fourteen days after exposure.

The CDC recommends the following preventative steps:

- Frequently wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol when soap and water are unavailable.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover coughs and sneezes.
- Stay home if you are sick.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>

Resources such as germ prevention strategies and posters are available on the CDC's website. School districts can likewise review additional guidance on the CDC's website and the sample checklist for pandemic influenza contained within the All-Hazards School Safety Planning Toolkit (<https://www.pema.pa.gov/Preparedness/Planning/Community-Planning/School-Safety/Documents/Chapter-6/Sample-Checklist-Pandemic-Influenza.pdf>)

While school districts are not expected to screen students or staff for COVID-19, it is important to establish procedures to send home students and staff who display symptoms of the virus. School districts should not enforce attendance requirements for students who might be suspected of having this virus.

School administrators should seek guidance from health officials to determine the necessary steps if a student or staff member attended school prior to confirmation of COVID-19. There have been several news reports of school district closures to enable deep cleaning of facilities. School districts should identify ways to continue educating students, particularly for students receiving special education and related services; this may include instructional telephone calls, internet-based lessons, and other distance-based learning methods.

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The EEOC recently addressed COVID-19 in the context of the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Rehabilitation Act and reaffirmed its guidance document addressing pandemic preparedness. https://www.eeoc.gov/eeoc/newsroom/wysk/wysk_ada_rehabilitaion_act_coronavirus.cfm

This guidance covers frequently asked questions about the steps that employers may take regarding COVID-19, including the extent of information an employer may request from an employee who calls in sick and directives to stay and/or work from home. You can review this guidance on https://www.eeoc.gov/facts/pandemic_flu.html.

Employers should contact their legal counsel to evaluate information on a case-by-case basis.