

March 10, 2020

### **Clarification on FAQs:**

Last week, the District sent out the answers to some frequently asked questions surrounding the novel coronavirus. You can find them on our website below. The following are additional questions that we have since received and needed additional clarification:

#### **Q: If I decide not to send my student to school due to concerns about coronavirus, will absences be excused?**

A: We understand community concern about student health and safety. Some families have asked about keeping their own child home based on the fear of contracting COVID-19 at school. This is certainly an option a family may be considering; however, per Education Code at this time, schools are unable to mark an absence excused for this reason. This would be considered an unexcused absence. Standard absence protocols remain in place. If a student is out for an extended period of time, a doctor's note may be required. Any absence due to quarantine or illness will be excused.

#### **Q: Should I travel during Spring Break?**

A: In the current environment, travel to countries that are labeled by the CDC as Warning Level 3 or Alert Level 2 is strongly discouraged. If you visit a country or place that is at Warning Level 3 or Alert Level 2, you must report this to your Principal before returning to school. Your child will be required to stay home and away from fellow students for 14 days after your return to San Diego and before coming back to school. This is the standard self quarantine period recommended by the CDC. At the moment these countries include China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, and Japan. Any absence due to quarantine or illness will be excused.

Please check here for up to date travel warning information:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

#### **Q: When will K-12 schools need to close?**

A: Please review the following guidance from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and California Department of Education (CDE). They have outlined four scenarios that should be considered by each school district in order to protect students, families, and staff.

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The CDPH, in consultation with the CDE, will update this guidance as needed and as additional information becomes available.

### **(PUSD'S CURRENT STATUS)**

**Scenario I: Measures already underway to prevent the spread of COVID-19.**

Pursuant to prior guidance released, school administrators have or should immediately take steps to slow the spread of respiratory infectious diseases, including COVID-19. CDPH has recommended implementing the following steps:

- Exclude students, teachers, or staff who have a travel history over the course of the last 14 days to an area identified by the CDC as Warning Level 3 or Alert Level 2 Travel Health Notice. Additionally, exclude those who have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19 from the school for 14 days from the day of their last exposure.
- Send students, teachers, and staff who present with fever >100 degrees and/or respiratory infection symptoms home immediately. Separate them from others until they go home. When feasible, identify a “sick room” through which others do not regularly pass.
- Encourage all students, families, and staff to take everyday preventive actions:
  - Stay home when sick. Remain at home until fever has been gone for at least 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medicines.
  - Seek immediate medical care if symptoms become more severe, e.g., high fever or difficulty breathing.
  - Use “respiratory etiquette” - cover cough with a tissue or sleeve. See CDC’s [Cover Your Cough page](#) for multilingual posters and flyers, posted at the bottom of webpage.
- Coordinate with all partner organizations serving students to ensure consistent practices.
- Encourage flu vaccine for those persons over 6 months of age who have not had it this season.
- Contact your local public health department immediately if you notice any concerning clusters of respiratory disease or spikes in absenteeism.
- Provide adequate supplies within easy reach, including tissues and no-touch trash cans.
- Encourage hand washing by students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and the provision of adequate supplies.
- Enhance cleaning consistent with CDC guidance (see Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations). Note: PUSD has provided updated cleaning guidelines to all custodial staff at all schools, which includes the use of EPA-approved, anti-microbial disinfectants.

**Scenario II: Measures to be taken if there are two or more community transmission cases of COVID-19, but no individuals within the school test positive.**

If the local public health department has confirmed two or more community transmission cases, but no individuals (staff or students) at the school have tested positive for COVID-19, in addition

to the items outlined in Phase I, CDPH recommends school administrators implement the following steps:

- Teachers and staff with any fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms should not come to work. Teachers and staff should self-screen (i.e., check themselves for subjective fever and/or respiratory symptoms such as cough) for respiratory infection symptoms each morning before interacting with students.
- Consider limiting visitors to the school.
- Consider alternatives to congregate or group programming within the school including any large or communal activities such as assemblies. Alternate approaches which limit close contact may include conducting assemblies via webcasts or intercom announcements.
- Consider implementing staggered recess times to limit the number of students who are together; and if possible, group recess by classrooms.
- Consider implementing social distancing recommendations - field trips and athletic events will be reviewed on a case by case basis.

### **Scenario III: Measures to be taken if one student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and exposed others at the school.**

If one student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and exposed others at the school, CDPH recommends that school administrators implement the following steps:

- In consultation with the local public health department, the appropriate school official may consider if school closure is warranted and length of time based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by the local public health officer.
- In consultation with the local public health department, school officials may determine readmission criteria after the school closures.
- Closing schools is a difficult decision as it has impacts on families and employers. The state will continue to assess the situation and provide information as needed.
- Provide guidance to parents, teachers and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while school is closed, including self quarantining if necessary and discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere. Community social distancing measures include canceling group activities or events, religious services, after-school classes, and sporting events.
- Consider developing a plan for continuity of education, medical and social services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.

- Maintain regular communications with the local public health department.
- Consult CDC guidelines (see Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations) for schools to determine what additional cleaning protocols, if any, should be deployed at the school prior to reopening the school.
- Determine the timing of return of students and staff, and any additional steps needed for the school to reopen, in consultation with the local public health department.

**Scenario IV: Measures to be taken if multiple schools within a school district have a student, teacher or staff member test positive for COVID-19.**

If multiple schools within the school district have a student, teacher or staff member test positive for COVID-19, the school and district administrators would consult with local public health officials for guidance on additional school closures.

If it is determined that all schools within the school district should be closed for instruction, CDPH recommends the following:

- In consultation with the local public health department, the school and district administrators may determine if additional school closures and what length of time is warranted based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by the local public health officer.
- Develop communication plans for school closure to include outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community.
- Provide guidance to parents, teachers and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while school is closed, including self quarantining if necessary and discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere. Community social distancing measures include canceling group activities or events, religious services, after-school classes and sporting events.
- Consider developing a plan for continuity of education, medical and social services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
- Maintain regular communications with the local public health department.
- Work with the local public health department to determine what additional cleaning protocols, if any, should be deployed at the school prior to reopening the school.
- Determine the timing of return of students and staff, and any additional steps needed for the school to reopen, in consultation with the local public health department.

The CDE and CDPH urges schools to ensure students' and staffs' privacy to help prevent discrimination or unnecessary stigmatization. For additional information or questions regarding medically fragile populations, programs, or funding implications, please contact the CDE.

**Additional Resources.**

- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website](#)
- [California Department of Public Health Website](#)
- [San Diego County Health & Human Services Agency](#)