

COVID-19 Guidance for Indiana School Nurses

School nurses serve as a vital health resource for schools. As such, school nurses have a responsibility to be well informed regarding health conditions that might impact their school community, including the current COVID-19 outbreak. Schools should be actively involved in the planning process surrounding COVID-19, which includes partnering with local public health authorities and updating infectious disease pandemic plans. School nurses should be included as critical members of the planning team.

The three most critical items a school nurse must know regarding COVID-19 are as follows: (1) how is the virus spread, (2) what are the signs and symptoms, and (3) what locations are currently experiencing outbreaks. The current status for each of these questions is listed below with a link to the website containing the most accurate information on each topic. Please remember that this is a fluid situation, and it is recommended that school nurses and school administrators review these links routinely as the COVID-19 situation can, and will continue to, change and evolve.

- How is the virus spread?
 - Current status – spread from person-to-person between people in close contact through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes
 - It may be possible to get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes
 - Link to information – [click here](#)
- What are the signs and symptoms?
 - Current status - fever, cough and shortness of breath
 - Link to information – [click here](#)
- What locations currently have travel notices in place?
 - Current status – Level 3 countries: China, Iran, Italy and South Korea; Level 2 countries: Japan
 - Travel advisories are changing frequently, so please refer to the [CDC's risk assessment](#) for the most up-to-date information.

Action Steps for School Nurses and Administrators

- Connect with your county health department – locate the contact information for the public health nurse and the county health officer. If contact is difficult, please reach out to the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH).
- Meet with your custodial staff to review routine cleaning of high touch surfaces (e.g., door handles, faucets, and light switches) and ensure handwashing supplies are consistently checked, refilled, and kept in stock. Consider more in-depth cleaning based

on your student illness rates. Routine cleaning supplies are sufficient for use at this time. Specific cleaning information for schools can be found by [clicking here](#).

- Communicate with students and staff hand hygiene techniques and cough etiquette including:
 - Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds or use hand sanitizer after eating, using the restroom, coughing, sneezing, or touching your face.
 - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve. Throw away the tissue and then properly wash or sanitize your hands.
 - Discourage touching your face, sharing drinks, food, and facial products.
 - Discourage handshaking, high-fives, and other forms of close contact. The CDC provides these [health promotion materials](#).
- Communicate with students and staff that if soap and water are not readily available, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends the use of an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol. More resources from the CDC can be found [here](#).
- Communicate with students and staff that CDC does not recommend people who are well wear a mask to protect themselves from respiratory illness, including COVID-19. Masks should only be worn if it is recommended by a health care professional.
- Ensure school staff is tracking symptoms related to student illness (e.g., fever, cough, sore throat, vomiting or diarrhea), as well as the number and percentage of students absent due to illness in each building of the school corporation. If any individual building reaches the 20 percent absentee rate, schools are required to notify the local health department and IDOE by completing the appropriate online report (see below). If schools have a report, even one, of a student or staff member with a confirmed case of COVID-19, schools must contact the local health department and IDOE by completing the appropriate online report (see below).
 - [Link to 20% Absenteeism Form](#)
 - [Link to COVID-19 Reporting Form](#)
- If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is identified in a student or staff member, schools will be contacted by the health authority and further direction and guidance will be provided.

- Inform students, staff and school families that the CDC recommends that travelers avoid all nonessential travel to any country under a Level 3 travel advisory. Additionally, anyone returning from travel to countries with a CDC Level 3 travel advisory will be instructed to self-quarantine for 14 days. It would be recommended that enrolling students coming from a country with a CDC Level 3 travel health notice would also self-quarantine for 14 days before attending school. Anyone considering travel to a country under a Level 2 travel advisory should consider their current health condition, and those they are traveling with, as individuals older than 65, those with underlying health issues, and anyone with suppressed immune systems are considered at higher risk. Please encourage people to review the most up-to-date travel advisories as they are changing frequently.
- Inform students, staff and school families with spring break approaching, ISDH asks families who are considering international travel to keep in mind this situation is rapidly evolving. International travel to areas where COVID-19 is spreading may result in delays or possible quarantine if travel recommendations or restrictions change while abroad. Please encourage staff and families to review the CDC's frequently asked questions for [travel guidance](#).

Health Assessment of Students and Staff

- Remember that schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.
- School nurses should continue to assess students using routine school protocols.
- Establish a procedure to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible and are kept separate from well students and staff.
- Staff members who present symptoms should be encouraged to seek further evaluation by a healthcare provider.

If a school does not receive the guidance needed to make a decision regarding school health matters by contacting the local health department, schools should contact the ISDH Epidemiology Resource Center at 317-233-7125 (317-233-1325 after hours) or email ISDH at epiresource@isdh.in.gov.



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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Working Together for Student Success

Additional resources specifically for Indiana school nurses can be found on IDOE's Moodle Platform in the School Nurse Community of Resources. COVID-19 resources are posted in the Communicable Disease Section of the School Nurse Community. Instructions for creating an IDOE Moodle account can be found by clicking [here](#).

As a reminder for administrators and nurses, all COVID-19 documents will be housed on the IDOE [website](#).

School nurses are encouraged to follow all other regular school health policies and procedures until additional guidance or instructions are provided.

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