



CNMI Public School System

School Guidance on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19

This guidance is adapted from the Centers for Disease Control ([CDC](#)), Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools ([REMS](#)) and State of California – Health and Human Services Agency School Guidance Procedures. In order to effectively prevent and respond to COVID-19 outbreaks and to incorporate emerging information, this guidance will be updated as necessary and made available to schools and to the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force. All decisions made by school officials and local public health officials should be determined by the specific circumstances in local jurisdictions.

What is COVID-19?

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), COVID-19 is a respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus that originated in China and has now been detected internationally. It is part of a family of viruses found in humans and animals. Some people who may be at higher risk than others include the elderly and those suffering from serious chronic medical conditions.

How it spreads

The virus is transmitted mainly through close human contact passed on through respiratory droplets by infected individuals. It is also believed that people can spread the virus by touching objects that contain respiratory droplets of the virus.

Symptoms

The CDC cautions that illnesses can range from mild to severe, and in vulnerable populations, may cause death. The symptoms most often reported within 2-14 days of exposure are:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of Breath

A full clinical understanding of COVID-19 is still being discovered. At this time, there are no reported cases of COVID-19 in the CNMI. In order to mitigate the risks of a community spread, the CNMI Public School System (PSS) outlines the following scenarios and corresponding protocols.

Notices and Updates Regarding COVID-19

PSS will communicate with the community through the local media and official PSS outlets which include the Accountability, Research and Evaluation (ARE) Website, Official PSS Facebook Page and AP Notify. All official announcements will be vetted and issued from the office of the Commissioner of Education.

Actions to Prevent the Spread of COVID-19 in schools.

Pursuant to guidelines released, school administrators should immediately take the following precautionary steps:

1. Review and update comprehensive school plans, including continuity plans for teaching and learning if students are absent from schools.
2. Launch an aggressive Awareness Campaign: Encourage all students, families, and staff to take everyday preventive actions:
 - Stay home when sick.
 - i. Remain home until fever has gone down for at least 2 days without the use of fever reducing medicines.
 - ii. Seek immediate medical care if symptoms become severe (high fever or difficulty breathing)
 - Use respiratory etiquette
 - i. Cover coughs
 - ii. Provide adequate supplies within reach, including tissues, and no-touch trash cans.
 - Wash hands frequently
 - i. Encourage hand washing by students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing (ex. during transition), and the provision of adequate supplies.
3. Enhance cleaning consistent with CDC [guidance](#).
4. Sanitize all classrooms and/or buildings, especially on surfaces that have regular human contact.
5. Implement Precautionary Measures on all school campuses (See SOPs)
6. [Self-Quarantine](#): Send students, teachers, or staff home for at least 14 days or until they have been tested and cleared by CHCC:
 - who have traveled from areas identified by the CDC as [Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#)

- who have been in close contact with someone diagnosed with COVID-19
 - who has traveled from any area where there have been confirmed cases of COVID-19
 - Or who suspect they may have contracted or been exposed to COVID-19
7. Send students, teachers, and staff who present with fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms home immediately. Separate them from others until they go home. When feasible, identify a Waiting Area through which others do not regularly pass.
 8. Immediately communicate with CHCC to make contact with individuals presenting symptoms in order to do an evaluation for COVID-19.
 9. Encourage flu vaccine for those persons over 6 months of age who have not had it this season.
 10. Contact the Commissioner of Education immediately if you notice any concerning clusters of respiratory disease or spikes in absenteeism.

Measures for when there are two or more community cases of COVID-19, but no individuals within schools who test positive.

If the COVID-19 Task Force has identified **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 Scenario 1, PSS recommends school administrators implement the following steps:

1. 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.
2. Ensure sick leave policies for those teachers and staff to stay home if they have symptoms of respiratory infection.
3. Limit visitors to the school by not allowing those with symptoms of fever and/or respiratory infection or who have a travel history over the course of the last 14 days to an area identified by the CDC as [Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#).
4. Implement 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.
5. Implement staggered recess and lunch times to limit the number of students who are together; and if possible, group recess by classrooms.
6. Consider relaxing requirements for a doctor's note for the child to return to school after illness.

Measures to be taken if one student, teacher or staff member tests positive for COVID-19 and is exposed to others at the school, OR if the Governor/BOE/COE declares closure for the affected school or community.

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

1. In consultation with the Commissioner of Education and the COVID-19 Task Force, 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.
2. Bus personnel must take every precaution to ensure sanitation prior to evacuation and/or transportation of students.
3. In consultation with the local public health department, school officials may determine readmission criteria after the school closures. Plans for school closure and resumption of classes will be communicated through news or radio announcements and official PSS media outlets.
4. Implement communication plans for school closure to include outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community. Communication plans should include schedule for phone or email check-in, procedures for obtaining instructional packets and notifications of status for resuming classes.
5. Closing schools is a difficult decision as it has impacts on families and employers. The state will continue to assess the situation and provide regular updates as needed.
6. Provide guidance to parents, teachers and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while school is closed, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere. Community social distancing measures include canceling group activities or events, after-school classes and sporting events.
7. Consider developing a plan for continuity of education, access to mental health and medical services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
8. Meal programs can continue to offer meals when school is closed in selected locations.
9. Maintain regular communications with the local public health department. (COVID-19 Task Force)
10. 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.
11. 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.

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 administrator should consult with the Commissioner of Education who will alert local public health officials (COVID-19 Task Force) for guidance on additional school closures.

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

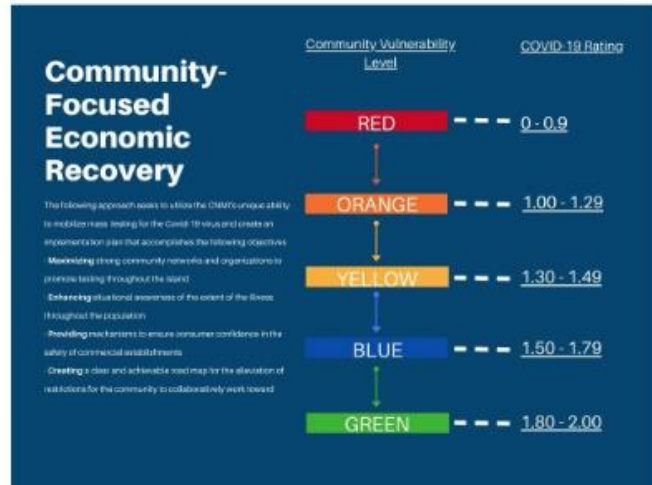
1. In consultation with the local public health department, the school administrator may determine if additional school closures and what length of time is warranted based on the risk level within the specific community as determined by the local public health officer.
2. Develop communication plans for school closure to include outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community.
3. Provide guidance to parents, teachers and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures while school is closed, including 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.
4. Implement a plan for continuity of education, access to medical and mental health services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
5. Maintain regular communications with the local public health department.
6. 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.
7. 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 CNMI State Board of Education and Public School System would urge 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

Corresponding CVL

- **Scenario 1: Full Remote Learning**
- **Scenario 2: Hybrid Remote & On-site Learning**
- **Scenario 3: Partial Reopening**
- **Scenario 4: Return to Normal with a total reopening of schools**



The CNMI Public School System will implement school openings in correspondence with the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force's Community Vulnerability Levels.

Red and Orange CVLs may necessitate the need for district or school closures to ensure the safety of personnel and students.

- **Scenario 1: Full Remote Learning**
 - Blackboard Ultra remote learning platform.
- **Scenario 2: Hybrid Remote & On-site Learning**
 - In-person learning in smaller groups w/ Staggered Schedules (block and tracking schedules)
- **Scenario 3: Partial Reopening**
 - In-person learning in smaller groups w/ Staggered Schedules (block and tracking schedules). No remote learning.
- **Scenario 4: Return to Normal with a total reopening of schools**
 - Appropriate safety mitigation strategies

Online Resource Links

The following links are provided to help you find updated information and resources to assist your family understand and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

- <https://www.cnmipssoare.org/>
- [CNMI Public School System Facebook Page](#)
- [Commonwealth Healthcare Corporation](#)
- [CNMI Homeland Security Pandemic Flu Plan](#)
- [For families](#)
- [How to talk to kids about the coronavirus](#)
- [Teacher resources](#)
- [Coronavirus Live Tracking](#)
- [CDC Prepare Yourself, Your Family, and Your Community](#)
- [CDC Get Your Home Ready: Checklist for Individuals and Families](#)
- [CDC Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19](#)
- [Coronavirus: What parents should know and do](#)
- [Talking to Children About COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\): A Parent Resource](#)
- [CDC What to do if you are sick](#)
- [CDC Preventing the Spread of Coronavirus Disease in Homes and Residential Communities](#)