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January 27, 2020

Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) Situation Summary for Schools

Illinois has experienced multiple confirmed cases of the coronavirus (5 at the time of this writing) throughout the state. This new virus poses a serious public health threat, but the immediate health risk from the virus to the general American public is considered low at this time. Since the virus originated in Wuhan, China, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends taking extra precautions at/near international airports, including O'Hare International Airport in Chicago, one of the busiest international airports in the world. Many of the characteristics of this particular virus are not yet known, including whether and how well it spreads between people, the severity of resulting illness, and the medical or other measures available to control the impact of the virus (for example, vaccine or treatment medications). Preparedness is key! Following in Q&A format are questions that we are fielding with links to additional information:

Q: Are schools required to notify parents/community or make inquiries about travel plans or illness?

At this time, no. The [CDC Coronavirus home page](#) is an excellent resource for schools and health care providers. Neither the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) nor the CDC currently recommend that any special precautions be implemented in school settings. However, it is advisable for school personnel (typically through the health office) to closely monitor student absences due to illness in the event that the IDPH or CDC requests this information. The currently known symptoms of the coronavirus include mild to severe respiratory illness with fever, cough, and difficulty breathing.

Q: What if a student or staff member has recently traveled to China?

A: At this time, school personnel are not required to take any special precautions for students or staff members who have traveled to or through China. The CDC is conducting entry screenings of passengers on direct and connecting flights from China to five major airports: Atlanta (ATL), Chicago (ORD), Los Angeles, (LAX) New York city (JFK), and San Francisco (SFO). The CDC has also deployed teams to support the ongoing investigations in Illinois and Washington. On January 23, 2020, the CDC issued a level 3 travel warning to avoid nonessential travel (the highest warning possible) for people visiting Hubei Province, China, which includes Wuhan.

Q: Are school staff required to report confirmed diagnoses of the avirus to public health officials?

A: Yes. The IDPH has classified the coronavirus as an “unusual case/cluster of cases that may indicate a public health hazard.” As such, school personnel are required to report a coronavirus diagnosis to the IDPH within 3 hours of receiving notice of the diagnosis. Public health officials are similarly required to notify the IDPH, which typically happens first. School officials must also make the report to IDPH to ensure monitoring and support for school officials and students.

Q: Must public health officials notify schools if a student or parent is diagnosed with coronavirus?





A: Yes. In situations where an illness is considered an outbreak or pandemic, the IDPH and the CDC are responsible for monitoring and notifying personnel in areas that the individual has frequented so as to alert the public. Public school officials typically receive the information directly from the family, physician and IDPH, or some combination of the three. In the unlikely event a student or community member is diagnosed with the coronavirus, the school district will work directly with the IDPH and the CDC to notify staff, students and community members. This notification protocol is beyond the scope of this update but it will be similar to the 2009 H1N1 Influenza outbreak and 2018-2019 measles outbreaks.



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