



# Pocono Mountain School District

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February 27, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians,

Tuesday's press conferences by infectious disease experts from the National Institute of Health (NIH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and the media coverage of the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) may have increased both your awareness and concerns about this new virus.

Please know that Pocono Mountain School District has processes and procedures in place to respond to, manage and stop the spread of infectious illnesses that could impact our students, staff and schools. We have a direct point-of-contact with the Pennsylvania Department of Health who helps guide our efforts whenever we have a health issue or concern. We also receive updates directly from the Department of Health and CDC on health-related issues, along with guidelines to keep our schools as healthy and safe as possible for our students and staff. We also coordinate with the health experts on the appropriate steps we should take when it comes to parent and public notification, cleaning and sanitizing our schools, and any other measures to reduce or contain the spread of any communicable and/or infectious illnesses.

In addition, if any students would be suspected of being exposed to COVID-19 or have symptoms of this illness, there is a reporting system in place as with other infectious diseases and pandemics where the Department of Health and local doctors inform our school nurses of any possible cases that could impact our student population and schools. This notification allows school officials to seek additional guidance and take additional recommended measures to keep parents informed and our students and staff as healthy as possible.

In our schools, our custodians have already implemented the CDC's recommendation for flu season and pandemic flu situations. They have implemented the daily cleaning of frequently touched surfaces and objects to include, but not limited to, desk and table tops, doorknobs and push bars, light switches, water fountains, and all bathroom surfaces. Our custodians use a hospital grade disinfectant that is rated to kill human Corona class viruses.

The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to other flu symptoms and include fever, cough, and shortness of breath, according to the Department of Health. I've included the following three fact sheets with this letter that I thought would be helpful in providing your family with factual information on this illness and how to keep your family safe:

- PA Department of Health Fact Sheet on the Coronavirus
- CDC Take Action to Help Slow the Spread of Flu and Illness
- CDC Guide on When to Seek Emergency Care

In addition, this information comes directly from the CDC's website regarding COVID-19: "While the immediate risk of this new virus to the American public is believed to be low at this time, everyone can do their part to help us respond to this emerging public health threat:

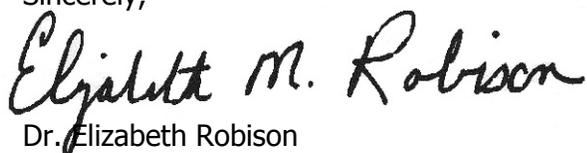
- "It's currently flu and respiratory disease season and CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
- "If you have been in China or have been exposed to someone sick with COVID-19 in the last 14 days, you will face some limitations on your movement and activity. Please follow instructions during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow spread of this virus. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, contact your healthcare provider, and tell them about your symptoms and your travel or exposure to a COVID-19 patient."

As with other types of influenza, the Department of Health recommends students/individuals take the following steps to avoid contracting and spreading COVID-19:

- Keep school-aged children home if they are feeling sick to avoid spreading illness to others;
- Teach and encourage frequent, proper hand washing technique for children of all ages;
- Teach and encourage children to cover their cough and sneeze by coughing/sneezing into a tissue or their elbow, not their hand;
- Teach children to avoid touching their eyes, nose and mouth without first washing their hands;
- Keep children healthy by having them eat a balanced diet, drinking plenty of water and getting plenty of rest and exercise; and
- Seek care if your child has an influenza-like illness.

We will also provide you with updates as new information becomes available to us on COVID-19 and how to protect our students, staff, and schools from this and other infectious diseases.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Elizabeth M. Robison". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

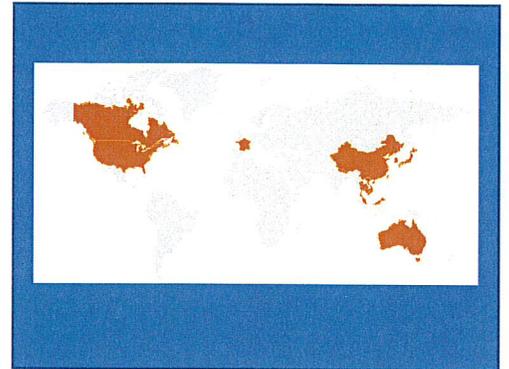
Dr. Elizabeth Robison  
Superintendent of Schools

## BACKGROUND

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that are common throughout the world. These viruses, at times, can evolve and infect people, then spread through human to human contact. Human coronaviruses spread just like the flu or a cold—through the air by coughing or sneezing; through close personal contact, like touching or shaking hands; by touching an object or surface with the viruses on it; and occasionally, through fecal contamination. This has occurred previously with the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS-CoV) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) outbreaks.

## WHO DOES THE ISSUE IMPACT?

People most at-risk to contracting a coronavirus are those who have traveled to places where the virus is occurring. In the case of the novel coronavirus, that location is the Wuhan area of China.



## WHAT ARE WE DOING?

The department frequently exercises and prepares for a potential infectious disease outbreak. We have been monitoring the coronavirus outbreak in China using information from our federal and local partners and are preparing our response teams in case of an outbreak here. We have talked with clinicians about the potential spread of the coronavirus into the United States and specifically, Pennsylvania, and also on how to ship lab specimens of potential coronavirus cases.

## WHAT ARE THE SYMPTOMS?

Symptoms of the 2019-nCoV can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. Reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **Cover** any coughs or sneezes with your elbow, do not use your hands!
- **Clean** surfaces frequently, such as countertops, light switches, cell phones and other frequently touched areas.
- **Contain**- if you are sick, stay home until you are feeling better.

## RESOURCES FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information, visit <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>

The latest information on the coronavirus in the U.S. and worldwide can be found on the [CDC website](#)

Additional information from the CDC on what to do if you are sick can be found [here](#)

# Take Action to Help Slow the Spread of Flu and Illness

CDC has developed recommended actions for preventing the spread of flu in household settings. Practice *everyday preventive actions* at all times. Plan for additional community NPI actions that may be recommended by public health officials, if a flu pandemic occurs. The **Before**, **During**, and **After** sections of this guide offer suggested strategies to help you plan for and implement these recommendations.

## EVERYDAY PREVENTIVE ACTIONS

*Everyone should always practice good personal health habits to help prevent flu.*



**Stay home when you are sick.** Stay home for at least 24 hours after you no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicines.



**Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue.**



**Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** Use at least a 60% alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.



**Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects.**

## NPIs RESERVED FOR A FLU PANDEMIC

*Everyone should be prepared to take these additional actions, if recommended by public health officials.\**

**For everyone:**



**Avoid close contact with others.** Keep a distance of at least 3 feet.



**Stay home if someone in your house is sick.**

**For sick persons:**



**Create a separate room for sick household members.**



**Use a facemask, at home or out in public.**



**Avoid sharing personal items.**



**Postpone or cancel your attendance at large events.**

\*These additional actions might be recommended for severe, very severe, or extreme flu pandemics.





### What are the symptoms of flu?

- Fever\***
- Cough**
- Sore throat**
- Runny or stuffy nose**
- Body aches**
- Headache**
- Chills**
- Fatigue**
- Sometimes vomiting and diarrhea**

\*Signs of fever include chills, feeling very warm, flushed appearance, or sweating.



### When should you seek emergency care?



#### Emergency symptoms for CHILDREN:\*

- Fast breathing or trouble breathing**
- Bluish skin color**
- Not drinking enough fluids**
- Not waking up or not interacting**
- Being so irritable that the child does not want to be held**
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with a fever and a worse cough**
- Fever with a rash**

\*Additional emergency signs for infants include being unable to eat, no tears when crying, and significantly fewer wet diapers than normal.



#### Emergency symptoms for ADULTS:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath**
- Pain or pressure in the chest or abdomen**
- Sudden dizziness**
- Confusion**
- Severe or persistent vomiting**
- Flu-like symptoms that improve but then return with a fever and a worse cough**



### Good health habits start at home.

Teach children to correctly practice good personal health habits at all times. Young children may need your help doing this! Tell them about the importance of not sharing personal items, such as water bottles, lip gloss, or food.



### CDC Fact Sheet: Do Your Part to Slow the Spread of Flu

<http://www.cdc.gov/nonpharmaceutical-interventions/communication/pdf/do-your-part-slow-spread-flu-factsheet.pdf>

*Note: The following sections include CDC's recommended actions for preventing the spread of pandemic flu and suggested strategies for implementing these recommendations.*