National Association of School Nurses

1100 Wayne Avenue, Suite 925
Silver Spring, Maryland 20910
866-627-6767 (phone)
301-585-1791 (fax)
nasn@nasn.org (email)
www.nasn.org

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Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID -19)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by COVID – 19. This disease was first detected in Wuhan City in China. CDC is following this rapidly evolving heath situation. On January 31, 2020, the United States declared a public health emergency to help the healthcare community respond to COVID-19. Exposure to COVID -19 comes from travel to China or direct contact with someone who has COVID – 19. Everyone can do their part to respond to this emerging public health threat. **Schools and school districts will want to collaborate with state and local health departments to update emergency operations plans in the event of a pandemic.** CDC recommendations are below.

- It is currently flu and respiratory disease season, CDC recommends getting a flu vaccine, taking everyday preventive actions to help stop the spread of germs, and taking flu antivirals if prescribed.
- Healthcare providers can be on the look-out for people who recently traveled from China and have fever and respiratory symptoms.
- If you are a healthcare provider caring for a COVID-19 patient or a public health responder, please take care of yourself and follow recommended infection control procedures.
- 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.
- For people who are ill with COVID-19, please follow CDC guidance on how to reduce the risk of spreading your illness to others.

School nurses lead health promotion and disease prevention in schools. School nurses can decrease fears and promote prevention of COVID-19, the flu, and other illnesses. School nurses can continue to be proactive by advising students, families, and staff to:

- **Stay home when you are sick.** If possible, stay home from work, school, and errands when you are sick. You will help prevent others from catching your illness. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth**. Germs spread this way.
- **Cover coughs and sneezes.** Use a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes, then dispose of the tissue. When a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow.
- **Clean and disinfect surfaces or objects.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill. CDC has additional resources on how to clean and disinfect schools at https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm.
- **Wash hands for 20 seconds.** Washing hands often under clean, running water can help prevent the spread of germs. For more guidance see the CDC: When and How to Wash

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Your Hands. If you cannot wash your hands, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60-95% alcohol.

School nurses should

- **Provide factual updates, as needed, regarding flu rates in the area, COVID-19** and tips to help decrease public fears.
- **Consult with primary care providers, local, and state health departments** if they observe individuals with symptoms or circumstances that seem to match those related to COVID-19 exposure.

NASN will continue to monitor and provide information on implementing CDC's recommendations. For CDC updates go to https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/index.html.