Administration Guidelines – COVID-19, Preparedness

Based on CDC Guidelines

- **Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans (EOPs).** This should be done in collaboration with local health departments and other relevant partners. Focus on the components of the plans that address infectious disease outbreaks.
    - o Include strategies to reduce the spread of a wide variety of infectious diseases (e.g., seasonal influenza). Effective strategies build on everyday school policies and practices.
    - o Emphasize common-sense preventive actions for students and staff. For example, emphasize actions such as staying home when sick; appropriately covering coughs and sneezes; cleaning frequently touched surfaces; and washing hands often.
    - o Include a Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) with procedures to ensure students can learn off-site in the case of a school closure. Consider implications for loss of school related support services (e.g., free and reduced lunch).

- **Ensure handwashing strategies**
    - o Wash with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
    - o Encourage handwashing before eating; after using the bathroom; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; after PE or outside time. Consider staggering arrival and dismissal times to incorporate handwashing or use of hand sanitizer.
    - o Utilize health promotion materials at school and provide materials for families.

- **Reference key resources while reviewing, updating, and implementing the EOP**
    - o Multiple federal agencies have developed resources on school planning principles and a 6-step process for creating plans to build and continually foster safe and healthy school communities *before*, *during*, and *after* possible emergencies. Consult the CDC website to access these resources.
    - o The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center's website contains free resources, trainings, and TA to schools and their community partners, including many tools and resources on emergency planning and response to infectious disease outbreaks.

- **Develop information-sharing systems with partners and the school community.**
    - o Information-sharing systems can be used for day-to-day reporting (on information such as changes in absenteeism) and disease surveillance efforts to detect and respond to an outbreak.
    - o Local health officials should be a key partner in information sharing.
    - o Include strategies for sharing information with staff, students, and their families. In family information, be sure to include information about steps being taken by the school or childcare facility to prepare and how additional information will be shared.
    - o Test communication capacity to ensure that multiple methods of communication are effective.

- **Planning for Absenteeism**
    - o Review your absence policies to ensure perfect attendance is not awarded or incentivized.
    - o Cross-train staff for critical job functions and positions.
    - o Encourage students and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.

- o Ensure students have methods to make up work and are not penalized for absences when sick.
- o Alert local health officials about large increases in student and staff absenteeism, particularly if absences appear due to respiratory illnesses (like the common cold or the "flu," which have symptoms similar to symptoms of COVID-19).

- **Students and staff who are sick at school.**
  - o Establish procedures to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible.
  - o Keep sick students and staff separate from well students and staff until they can leave.
  - o 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.
  - o Share resources with the school community to help families understand when to keep children home.

- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.**
  - o Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with the cleaners typically used.
  - o Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students and staff before each use.

- **Start planning social distancing strategies**
  - o Consider postponing noncritical gatherings and events, including assemblies and athletic events
  - o Start planning how school routines may be modified to stagger arrival/dismissal times and to avoid common areas.
  - o Examine the potential modification of classes that have close contact between students, such as PE and choir.
  - o Consider ways that desks may be reconfigured so they no longer face one another.

- **Remain up-to-date on CDC guidelines that provide specific recommendations for when there is:**
  - o A confirmed case of COVID-19 in your school
  - o Minimal to moderate community transmission
  - o Substantial community transmission

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html#no-community-transmission

Department of Education: https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus