

Frequently Asked Questions about COVID-19

March 5, 2020

What is COVID-19 or Coronavirus?

- Coronaviruses usually only cause mild illness
- COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus
- Most confirmed cases of COVID-19 have occurred in adults

What is the role of schools in responding to COVID-19?

- Schools play important role in slowing the spread of diseases
- Most important thing now is to plan and prepare for possible community transmission
- Schools are *not* expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19

What is the role of parents/caregivers in responding to COVID-19?

- Keep children home when they're sick
- Teach children everyday preventative measures:
 - Wash hands frequently with soap and water
 - Properly use and dispose of hand sanitizer
 - Cover coughs and sneezes

How do I talk to my child(ren) about COVID-19?

- Listen first, then correct potential misinformation
- Review preventative measures
- Use child-friendly informational resources

What is the Ithaca City School District doing to prepare for COVID-19?

- Planning and preparing
 - Reviewing, revising, and implementing EOPs
 - Communicating with health officials and educational institutions
 - Planning for absences
 - Continuing procedures for students/staff who are sick at school and cleaning protocols
 - Communicating often
- Fighting stigma

Can schools release the names of students exhibiting symptoms to local departments of health?

- In an emergency, FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent of records
- We collaborate with TCHD so families are informed of this

What about students and families who are quarantined by the Tompkins County Health Department?

- The ICSD maintains confidentiality of students quarantined by TCHD
- Quarantine is used to separate and restrict the movement of *well* persons who *may* have been exposed to a communicable disease
- Students who are quarantined will receive work and support remotely

Who can close schools?

- Decision rests first with school board / superintendent
- We will follow requests from local health departments, county emergency managers, and Governor
- The NYS Commissioner of Education also has authority to close schools

If warranted, how will schools handle an extended closure?

- The ICSD has initial, comprehensive plans for remote learning
 - We are developing these plans in consultation with organizations like ISTE and CoSN
- Current attendance policy remains in effect unless and until schools are closed

How would non-public schools be affected by decisions to close?

- Private schools are also subject to emergency declarations by the Governor and requests to close by local health departments and emergency managers

Are additional cleaning protocols being instituted in schools?

- New cleaning and disinfection guidelines from the NYS Department of Health:
 - Continue routine cleaning
 - Daily cleaning and disinfection of high-risk locations
 - School-wide cleaning and disinfection if individual with lab-confirmed COVID-19 was in school setting

How are schools handling concerns regarding international student and staff travel?

- TCHD is responsible for outreach and assessment of persons returning from countries with confirmed cases of COVID-19
- We will consult with health authorities to make informed decisions about school-sponsored trips

Resources

- ★ **New York State Department of Health**
www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus
- ★ **New York State Department of Education**
www.p12.nysed.gov/sss/schoolhealth/schoolhealthservices
- ★ **Tompkins County Health Department**
<http://tompkinscountyny.gov/health>
- ★ **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention**
www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html

Questions