



STATE OF MICHIGAN
GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR



MEMORANDUM

DATE: March 11, 2020

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors
Nonpublic School Administrators
Public Health Officers
Public Library Directors

FROM: Dr. Michael F. Rice, Superintendent of Public Instruction,
Michigan Department of Education

Dr. Joneigh Khaldun, Chief Medical Executive and Chief Deputy for
Health, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services

SUBJECT: COVID-19 Updated Guidance

Governor Gretchen Whitmer declared a state of emergency Tuesday evening, March 10, in response to the discovery of the first two presumptive positive cases of COVID-19. The emergency declaration will allow the state to maximize efforts and assist local governments and officials in slowing the spread of the virus.

Late today, the governor announced recommended community mitigation strategies for local school districts and childcare facilities. In doing so, she said: "We are encouraging schools, universities, businesses, and other organizations to use their best judgment about what steps are most appropriate to keep people safe and to slow the spread of the disease."

We share these recommended community mitigation strategies for schools and childcare facilities below:

1. Educate students and the community about COVID-19 and preventative hygiene practices (see list on the next page).
2. Encourage staff and students to stay home when sick.
3. Report influenza-like activity, absenteeism, and potential school dismissals to public health officials.
4. Separate sick students and staff from others until they can go home. When feasible, identify a "sick room" through which others do not regularly pass.
5. Communicate and reinforce best practices for washing hands and covering coughs and sneezes.
6. Regularly clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, like doorknobs, keyboards, desks, cell phones, and light switches.

7. Consider having students eat meals in their classrooms as opposed to a cafeteria-like setting, or alter meal schedules for smaller-group gatherings.
8. Limit large gatherings such as assemblies and inter-school interactions (e.g., greater than 100 people in a shared space).
9. Alter schedules for recess and entry/dismissal to reduce the mixing of large numbers of students and staff.
10. Schools with students at risk of severe illness should consider implementing plans for learning at a distance for those students, to the extent feasible.

The state of Michigan has been working with federal and local partners to monitor the situation, develop and expand laboratory testing, educate and raise awareness, and prepare for COVID-19 in Michigan.

On February 28, Governor Whitmer activated the State Emergency Operations Center (SEOC) to coordinate state-government resources. On March 3, Governor Whitmer announced the creation of four task forces to combat the spread of coronavirus and assess the impact that the virus may have on Michiganders' day-to-day lives. One of those task forces is for education, which has been meeting regularly to monitor and assess the proper guidance for educational institutions.

As you were informed in a memo sent on Friday, Feb. 28, the overall threat to the general public and in the U.S. remains low, but we are approaching this emerging threat to public health with an abundance of caution. As partners, you should have appropriate information on what individuals can do to protect themselves.

Use good hygiene practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases.

- Stay home if you are sick, and advise others to do the same.
- Always cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or sleeve.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and warm water are not available.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

It's not too late to get your flu shot! While the influenza vaccine does not protect against COVID-19 infection, it can help keep you healthy during the flu season.

Review travel advisories before planning travel.

Always review travel advisories from the federal government when planning personal and business travel. Review [CDC.gov/Travel](https://www.cdc.gov/travel) for destinations with risk of community spread of COVID-19.

Share accurate information.

Always share accurate information about a virus and its spread. It is important to remember that stigma and discrimination occur when people associate an infectious disease, such as COVID-19, with a population or nationality. COVID-19 does not target people from specific populations, ethnicities or racial background. Suspected discrimination can be reported to the Michigan Department of Civil Rights.

This is a rapidly evolving situation. For the latest information, please see Michigan.gov/Coronavirus or CDC.gov/Coronavirus. The CDC has provided [guidance for preventing the spread of COVID-19 in communities including businesses, community- and faith-based organizations, and childcare organizations and schools.](#)

Decisions to exclude a student or staff member, or to close schools and childcare centers altogether, must be made on a case-by-case and location-by-location basis, in coordination with local health departments. These decisions are local in nature and could vary from district to district or school to school.

We will continue to share with you as more information becomes available. Thank you for all you do to keep Michigan schools and communities safe.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance
Robert Gordon, Director, Michigan Department of Health and Human Services