

DATE:	March 6, 2020
SUBJECT:	TEA Spring Break Guidance/Update on Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19)
CATEGORY:	Informational
NEXT STEPS:	Share with appropriate staff

Spring break is beginning for some districts in Texas the week of March 9, and many other districts the week of March 16. As usual, a large number of school personnel, students, and their families will be traveling outside of the state for vacation, with some even traveling far outside the country.

With increased news reports about the growing number of cases globally of novel coronavirus (COVID-19)—and Texas’ first confirmed cases this week—many districts have posed questions to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) about how best to manage concerns about the health of students and personnel who will be returning to their campuses after spring break travel.

As is always the case, districts and open-enrollment charter schools have the authority to request that students and/or staff stay home if there is serious concern about their current health, whether or not they pose a health risk to others in the community. For the time being, these decisions should be made on a case-by-case basis. Our guidance is to continue exercising good judgment, applying common sense, and working closely with your local health authorities to make the decisions that will maximize the health and safety of your students, staff, and their families. While TEA’s standing attendance and instructional minutes waiver policies remain in effect, we will work with any districts and charter schools who, in the future, are advised by their local health authorities to close schools.

Additionally, new students that seek to enroll following spring break from COVID-19 affected areas (internationally or domestically) must be allowed to enroll unless they have traveled to a Level 3 Travel Health Notice country (in which case districts must follow the below guidance from the CDC before students are allowed to enroll). The provisions of Texas Education Code, Section 25.001(b), require admission of eligible students, regardless of health issues that may have arisen in areas in which students have previously resided. That said, school districts and charters should consult with their local health authorities to address health concerns regarding school attendance for such admitted students.

An important note regarding local health authorities: the [DSHS regional office](#) is your local health authority if your city or county is not on the list of [local public health organizations](#) listed on the Department of State Health Services (DSHS) website.

As for more technical guidance related to travel to countries with Level 3 Travel Health Notices, which are currently experiencing widespread, ongoing transmission of COVID-19, please see below:

- China ([Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#))
 - More information for [Travelers from China arriving in the United States](#)
- Iran ([Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#))
- Italy ([Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#))

- South Korea ([Level 3 Travel Health Notice](#))

Important Reminder: If traveling to any countries with Level 3 Travel Health Notices, Center for Disease Control (CDC) guidance calls for staying home for 14 days from the time you left an area with widespread, ongoing community spread (Level 3 Travel Health Notice countries) and practice social distancing. The CDC recommends the following steps for individuals who have traveled to Level 3 Travel Health Notice countries and areas in the U.S. affected by COVID-19:

1. Take your temperature with a thermometer two times a day and monitor for fever. Also watch for cough or trouble breathing.
2. Stay home and avoid contact with others. Do not go to work or school for this 14-day period. Discuss your work situation with your employer before returning to work.
3. Do not take public transportation, taxis, or ride-shares during the time you are practicing social distancing.
4. Avoid crowded places (such as shopping centers and movie theaters) and limit your activities in public.
5. Keep your distance from others (about 6 feet).

For additional health precautions, please visit:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>

TEA also strongly encourages districts and charters to use the spring break period to deep clean facilities. The CDC has released guidance on how best to clean and disinfect schools. The guidance can be found here:

https://www.cdc.gov/flu/pdf/freeresources/updated/cleaning_disinfecting_schools.pdf

The Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) is the lead agency in the state's preparedness efforts. DSHS is working closely with the Office of the Governor and the Texas Division of Emergency Management (TDEM) to coordinate and plan the state's response to COVID-19.

- Governor Abbott has directed TDEM and DSHS to hold twice-weekly meetings of the Texas Emergency Management Council (39 state agencies/institutions of higher education) at the Texas State Operations Center to discuss and review state emergency planning documents and how these plans will be implemented during the state's response to COVID-19.
- In addition to reviewing state planning documents, the Texas Emergency Management Council has discussed:
 - Precautionary strategies Texas is implementing to safeguard communities and protect public health;
 - Achieving consistent communication between local, state, and private sector partners;

- Reviewing all emergency management council member agency areas of responsibility within the Emergency Support Functions (ESFs) during response; and
- Charging agencies with reviewing their own operational plans to ensure they can continue to operate efficiently and provide service to Texas during an event.

TEA is actively involved in the effort to adequately prepare our state's citizens in the event that COVID-19 begins to spread in Texas.

We will continue working diligently to provide guidance to all of our districts and charter partners across the state.

We know you will continue to have questions, and we will soon be posting an FAQ section on our newly created [COVID-19 website](#) that will include other pertinent guidance. Additional topics will include guidance related to school finances, communications, and delivery of instruction. Look for that in the next two weeks. In the meantime, please direct any timely questions on COVID-19 to the following email account: disasterinfo@tea.texas.gov.

We are here to support you.

Enjoy Spring Break. Travel safely and take good care of your health.