

## COVID-19 Guidance for Non-Pharmaceutical Interventions

### School Closures and Dismissals

Data suggests that school closures and dismissals in the event of severe outbreaks or pandemics can reduce the spread of disease. However, the burden experienced by the community can be great, so the decision to close schools must be weighed carefully. Consider the following items when deciding if school closures are appropriate:

- Caregiving challenges faced by parents (loss of income, consequences of missed work, etc.)
- Students congregating in alternate locations
- Supervision of students if parents become sick or are required to work
- Vulnerable student populations needing additional care
- Vulnerable student population programs (e.g., free school meals) that will be discontinued temporarily
- Education and mental health considerations if closures are prolonged

Facilities subject to school closures include childcare facilities, K-12 schools, and colleges and universities.

A school dismissal means that students would be sent home, but facilities would be kept open and staff would be allowed to continue to work. A school closure means that all students and staff would be sent home. Coordinated school closures and dismissals can allow for 1) time to assess transmissibility of the disease, 2) to slow the spread in the early stages of circulation, or 3) for vaccine development to happen (in a very prolonged dismissal or closure). Strategies for social distancing in schools include the division of classes into smaller groups of students and spacing so that students are not seated closely.

Note: Closures and dismissals could also be applied selectively to schools serving high-risk populations or reactively to schools with high rates of absenteeism from illness. These are not considered non-pharmaceutical interventions as there is no evidence to show that community transmission is reduced when these methods are implemented in the event of an outbreak or pandemic.

### Proposed actions:

- Local health departments have the authority to close schools when necessary to protect the public's health. In the event that a school closure is necessary, the local health department will work closely with the school district, school, and Utah Department of Health to make the determination that best addresses the specific situation.

- Teach your children to wash their hands for 20 seconds with soap and water (long enough to sing the Happy Birthday song two times).
- Teach your children to wash their hands often; before eating, after going to the bathroom, and after recess or playing.
- Tell your children not to touch their mouth or eyes with their hands.
- Teach your children how to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or an elbow.
- Tell your children not to share food, or drink from the same cup or bottle, as someone else.

**Clean and disinfect your home and car.**

Clean places and things that are touched often (like door knobs, light switches, toilet handles, sink handles, and countertops) with cleaner and disinfectant.

**Make sure you have a plan for a caregiver, like a family member or neighbor, for sick children if you can't stay home.**

If you are having problems getting breakfast or lunch for your children when they are home sick, please call your school for help.

**If your child is sick, call your doctor.**

If your child has any of these symptoms, or signs of sickness, call your doctor to see if you should go to the clinic. They may just want you to keep your child at home. You may have heard in the news that people are getting tested for COVID-19. Not everyone needs to get tested for COVID-19. Your doctor will know if you or your child should be tested.

**Keep your children away from people who are sick and from older adults as much as possible.**

Children are less likely to get very sick with COVID-19, but can spread illness to others. This illness is most harmful to older adults. During this outbreak, it is a good idea to keep children with cold or flu symptoms away from older adults.

School Closures

At this time, schools will stay open. Right now, children are not at a high risk for getting very sick from COVID-19. Local health departments have the authority to close schools when necessary to protect the public's health. In the unlikely event that a school closure is necessary, the Summit County Health Department will work closely with the school district, school, and Utah Department of Health to determine what best addresses the specific circumstances.

If you have any questions, please call South Summit School District 435-783-4301 or visit the website at [www.ssummit.org](http://www.ssummit.org) for the most-up-to date information.

Sincerely,

Superintendent Shad E. Sorenson

Richard Bullough