

USD 352 Crisis Mitigation: COVID-19 Exposure Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Plan for Education Institutions

The purpose of this plan is to outline the steps that every staff member and student should take to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19. The plan describes how to prevent student and staff exposure to coronavirus, protective measures to be taken in the classroom, personal protective equipment and work practice controls to be used, cleaning and disinfecting procedures, and what to do if a staff member or student becomes sick.1

USD 352 Goodland Public Schools take the health and safety of our employees very seriously. With the spread of the coronavirus or “COVID-19,” a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, we all must remain vigilant in mitigating the outbreak. This is particularly true for the education setting, which is crucial in reopening and keeping schools open during this Declared National Emergency. (*COVID-19 Planning Considerations*, n.d.) In order to be safe and maintain operations, we have developed this COVID-19 Exposure Prevention, Preparedness, and Response Plan to be implemented throughout the School District and all of our classrooms. We have also identified a team of employees to monitor available U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), Kansas Department of Education (KSDE) and our County Health Department for additional information.

This Plan is based on currently available information from the CDC, KDHE and KSDE, and is subject to change based on further information provided by the CDC, KDHE, KSDE, and other public officials. This plan has been adopted as policy by the USD 352 Board of Education. The District may also amend this plan based on operational needs, current information, and the latest research on COVID-19.

The plan for school operations for 2020-21 will include a 3-Tiered plan to help facilitate the guidance and protocols for the current situation in Sherman County and across the State of Kansas. This plan will provide the greatest flexibility for us to maintain normal operations while being able to react to current data and conditions. The District can move from one Tier to another and back as deemed necessary based on the current data, trends, positive cases, hospitalizations, etc. The district will work in partnership with the Sherman County Health Department, Kansas Department of Health and Environment, and Kansas Department of Education in making the determination of Tier status.

Any questions regarding this plan can be directed to any of the attendance centers administrators or directly to Bill Biermann, Superintendent of Schools, 785-890-2397 or bill.biermann@usd352.org

Tier I Guidance & Protocols

The basis of Tier I is the continued operations of our schools in an environment where we have no or a very low number of active positive cases in our school community. Our focus is on putting policies and guidance in place that mitigates the risk so that we can maintain a Tier 1 protocol.

- All Buildings and Grade Levels
 - Increased focus and frequency of cleaning during the day.
 - All staff and students must take a daily temperature check upon arrival at the school.
 - Frequently wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. When soap and running water are unavailable, use an alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Follow appropriate respiratory etiquette, which includes covering for coughs and sneezes.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - In addition, employees and staff must familiarize themselves with the symptoms of COVID-19:
 - Coughing;
 - Fever;
 - Shortness of breath, difficulty breathing; and
 - Early symptoms such as chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose.
 - Water fountains will only be utilized with the water bottle filling options. All other water foundations will be inoperable. Therefore, all students will need their own water bottle.
 - All students will be required to use hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the classroom.
 - Buildings will open 15 meetings prior to the start of school and students will go directly to their classroom. This will be strictly enforced this year. If a student is eating breakfast, they will pick up their breakfast and take it to their classroom.
 - Students will not share school supplies.
 - Students will have designated areas for entrance to the building as well as pickup and dismissal policies to avoid large gatherings of students.
 - Breakfast will be “Grab & Go” as students take their breakfast to their first class.
 - All Parents/Visitors will be required to check in at the office and have a temperature check if they want access to the building. Limited accessibility to enter the building will be given.
 - Students will be required to leave the property upon dismissal from schools. Students seeking additional help from a teacher should report immediately to the teacher’s classroom.

- West Elementary
 - Individual teacher classrooms will be kept together as a group for the entire day. Students will go to recess and specials as a class with no mixing of other classrooms.
 - Students will stay with their class during lunch as well, separated from other classes.
 - If snacks are brought to the classroom, they must be store bought & pre-packaged.
 - Classes will have scheduled bathroom breaks
 - Kindergarten students should bring a Nap Towel (beach towel size) - not mats
 - Partitions/ plexiglass available in the school
 - All students will be required to use hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the classroom.
 - Soft start and WIN time will be conducted in the classroom.
 - 40 minutes alternate music/pe by day - allow some time in between classes for cleaning
 - Parents may enter the classroom by appointment only during the school day. Must have temperature checked and wear a mask.

- North Elementary
 - Individual teacher classrooms will be kept together as a group for the entire day. Students will go to recess, lunch, and specials as a class with no mixing of other classrooms.
 - Soft start and WIN time will be conducted in the classroom.
 - Lunch - no mixing classes. One class at a time. Sit in a designated area. Dismiss students - teachers pick up students
 - 5th grade band - go by class
 - 6th grade band - social distance
 - Teachers move to different classrooms - not the students
 - All students will be required to use hand sanitizer upon entering and exiting the classroom.

- JH/HS
 - A revised schedule will be put in place that minimizes the number of student and teacher interactions and contacts during the day.
 - 2nd chance breakfast will be offered as a “grab and go” option in the morning.
 - Administration and staff will encourage social distancing and to space students in the classrooms and the building the best they can.
 - Students will be asked to have a mask as a regular school supply. Certain classes where social distancing cannot be achieved and students are working in close proximity to one another, students may be asked to put on their mask during that time.
 - In an effort to avoid students mingling in the hallway, students will not be given a locker for school supplies. If a case can be made why a student needs a locker, then administration may assign a locker upon that request being granted.
 - Students will be provided a locker at the MAX Jones for Physical education classes but all attempts will be made to space students.

Tier II Guidance & Protocols

The basis of Tier II is the continued operations of our schools in an environment where we have some but small number of positive cases in our school community. Our focus is on putting policies and guidance in place that mitigates the risk of rising numbers and communal spread while maintaining a sound educational system. All the Tier I procedures are in place in addition to:

- All Buildings and Grade Levels
 - All staff are required to wear appropriate PPE (masks).
 - PPE reusable masks will be provided to staff members by the district for this purpose and if any students are unable to have a mask, one will be provided if the school is requiring it.
 - Individual buildings will work to develop a Hybrid Learning model. The schools will work to lower the number of students required to attend school on a daily basis. We would move to an environment of mixed learning modules of online, and on-site instruction.
 - The district will work hard to coordinate a hybrid schedule that allows families with students in different buildings to be on similar schedules.
- West Elementary
 - Group A will have on-site instruction on Monday & Thursday.
 - Group B will have on-site instruction on Tuesday & Friday.
 - Wednesday will be a flex day that provides opportunities for deeper cleaning; but teachers will be still providing instruction to students digitally. Teachers will also be planning for personalized learning. Some students will be in the building for individualized instruction as needed.
 - Students choose library books from designated tubs for their class.
 - Specials will be 20 minutes classes when on-site.
- North Elementary
 - All students will wear a mask when in the building.
 - Group A will have on-site instruction on Monday & Thursday.
 - Group B will have on-site instruction on Tuesday & Friday.
 - Wednesday will be a flex day that provides opportunities for deeper cleaning; but teachers will be still providing instruction to students digitally. Teachers will also be planning for personalized learning. Some students will be in the building for individualized instruction as needed.
 - Students choose library books from designated tubs for their class.
 - Specials will be 20 minutes classes when on-site.
- JH/HS
 - All students will wear a mask when in the building.
 - Hybrid Learning model will be established with the goal of reducing further (50%) the students in the building at one time. It will be a mixed of on-site learning and remote learning opportunities.

Tier III Guidance & Protocols

The basis of Tier III is the continued operations of our schools in an environment where we have a rising number of positive cases in our school community. Our focus is on putting policies and guidance in place that allows our students to continue to learn but has no to minimal face to face teaching and on-site learning.

- All Buildings and Grade Levels
 - Schools will be closed and the majority of education will take place on-line.
 - Teachers and students will be teaching and learning in a remote learning environment.
 - District will consider providing on site services for Special Education students on a case by case basis.

Learning Options

USD 352 NAVIGATING CHANGE 2020: LEARNING OPTIONS

On-site Learning Environment: students and teachers will be in school with safety practices put into place.

Hybrid Learning Environment: students will spend part of their instructional time on-site and part of their instructional time off-site. (Off-site learning will be primarily in a digital format.)

Remote Learning Environment: students do all of their learning off-site.

- **USD 352 School Building Closure** - a continuation of the in-person learning model, but entirely in an off-site environment. Instructional content is primarily delivered in a digital format. Eligible to participate in extracurricular activities.
- **USD 352 Virtual Program** - student is enrolled in Goodland Virtual School (GVS). Instruction coordinated through USD 352's instructional staff using Edgenuity. Parents choosing this option need to understand the commitment in grades K-6 is by 9-week period and at grades 7-12 by semester. District iPad and required apps/programs are supplied. Eligible to participate in District extracurricular activities.
- **USD 352 Home-based Partnership** - This option is open to K-8 students. Students are enrolled full-time in USD 352. Curriculum materials (textbook) and Kansas Curricular Standards support is available from a USD 352 licensed teacher. Instruction is coordinated independently. Periodic check-ins with USD 352 staff and a Remote Learning Time Log are required. Parents choosing this option need to understand the commitment in grades K-6 is by 9-week period and at grades 7-12 by semester. Eligible to participate in District extracurricular activities.

Enrollment Options

2020-2021 USD 352 Enrollment Options

	ON-SITE	OFF-SITE	
	In-person Learning Environment	USD 352 Virtual Program	USD 352 - Home-based Partnership
Description	Students learn in the school building with some safety modifications in place. Where possible, social distancing, reduced transitions, and other measures will be in place to minimize exposure for students and staff. Depending on guidance from state and local officials, students in the in-person setting may experience periods of remote learning due to school closure or attend school on a hybrid schedule.	Students take all of their coursework through a virtual learning platform. Courses are designed by USD 352 teachers. This option is not a temporary placement. Students will have the opportunity to opt in or out at quarter (K-6) or semester (7-12).	This option is open to students K-8. Students will complete coursework off-site. Curriculum materials and Kansas Curricular Standards support is available from USD 352 staff, however instructional delivery is coordinated independently. Periodic check-ins with USD 352 staff and a Remote Learning Time Log are required. This option is not a temporary placement. Students will have the opportunity to opt in or out at quarter (K-6) or semester (7-12).
Eligibility & Cost	All students are eligible. Typical registration fees will apply.	All students are eligible. Typical registration fees will apply. There is no additional cost to select this option.	All students are eligible. Typical registration fees will apply. There is no additional cost to select this option.
Technology	Students will have a district-provided iPad that they will be expected to use for their classwork. Assistance information will be shared for families with no or limited internet access, should a hybrid learning environment begin.	Students will have a district-provided iPad. Assistance information will be shared for families with no or limited internet access.	Students will have a district-provided iPad. Assistance information will be shared for families with no or limited internet access.

Curriculum & Instruction	Students will experience the full USD 352 curriculum and instructional model in a mostly traditional format. Some courses, due to their nature, may be modified based on health and safety precautions.	Edgenuity Virtual Learning Platform will be used to facilitate coursework though independent use in core content areas and some elective options. USD 352 staff will monitor and assist when necessary.	Print and/or digital access to curriculum materials and learning platforms used in the traditional setting will be provided, along with suggested pacing guides for core content areas and some elective options. Instruction will be facilitated independently.
Time	The hours a student spends at school will look similar to previous years. School day schedules have been adjusted to minimize transitions and exposure for students and staff.	Students USD 352 Virtual Program should plan to spend a similar amount of time on school work as their on-site peers. Students will spend around six hours a day on school. (The all-virtual option will not represent a reduction of learning time, as was the case in the spring of 2020 with Continuous Learning.)	Students in the USD 352 Home-based Partnership program should plan to spend a similar amount of time on school work as their in-person peers.
Assessments & Grading	Assessments and grading will continue as in years past. Grading will resume as it was before the school closure of spring 2020. In the event of a student's extended absence due to COVID-19, considerations will be given. Students will participate in state and district assessments.	Students will receive high-quality feedback and engage in tasks and assessments similar to their on-site peers. Students will participate in all state and district tests. Grades will be shared in the same manner and on the same timeline as in-person courses.	Arrangements will be made for students to participate in required state and district assessments. Effort will be made to deliver them digitally, however on-site administration may be the only option in some cases. Grading will be handled through consultation with USD 352 staff.
Activities & Athletics	Students in grades 7-12 will have the opportunity to participate in KSHSAA-	Students in grades 7-12 will have the opportunity to	Students in grades 7-8 will have the opportunity to

	sanctioned athletics and activities.	participate in KSHSAA-sanctioned athletics and activities.	participate in District extracurricular activities.
Communication	Teachers will continue to communicate with families in traditional methods. Teachers will regularly post content and activities to assist students when home for periods of absence as a result of COVID-19 using the district selected platforms, Class Dojo K-2, and Schoology 3-12, and PowerSchool	Teachers will use Edgenuity as the platform for all class communication, parent information, live/synchronous session links, etc.	Periodic check-ins with USD 352 staff though Class Dojo (K-2), Schoology (3-12), phone, email, and in-person will be required. Accountability of both USD 352 and the Homeschool program, is required through a Remote Learning Time Log.

Transportation

Safely transporting our students to and from school and school related activities is critical and the following guidelines have been established.

- There will not be an in-town shuttle service provided during this school year.
- Students 3rd grade and higher, will be required to wear a mask while in transport if six feet of social distancing cannot be maintained.
- If the school is in Tier II or Tier III then face mask will be required.
- Route Bus drivers will wear mask at all times.
- Students temperatures will be taken when entering the bus. If a student has a temperature then they will not be allowed to ride the bus. Parents are encouraged to have backup plans ready in case a student is not permitted to ride that day.
- All busses and student transport vehicles will be sanitized and disinfected each day upon arrival back at the bus barn.

Responsibilities of Staff and Students

We are asking every one of our employees and students to help with our prevention efforts while at work. In order to minimize the spread of COVID-19 at our schools, we all must play our part. As set forth below, the District has instituted various housekeeping, social distancing, and other best practices at our Schools. All employees must follow these. In addition, employees are expected to report to their Principals and Directors if they are experiencing

signs or symptoms of COVID-19, as described below. If you have a specific question about this Plan or COVID-19, please ask your Principal or Director. If they cannot answer the question, please contact **Bill Biermann, Superintendent of Schools**, bill.biermann@usd352.org

Responsibilities of Principals and Directors

All Principals and Directors must be familiar with this Plan and be ready to answer questions from employees. Managers and supervisors must set a good example by following this Plan at all times. This involves practicing good personal hygiene and school building safety practices to prevent the spread of the virus. Principals and Directors must encourage this same behavior from all employees.

Attendance Center Protective Measures

The District has instituted the following protective measures at the USD 352 Attendance Centers.

A. *General Safety Policies and Rules*

- Any employee/student/visitor showing symptoms of COVID-19 will be asked to leave the attendance center and return home.
- Employees must avoid physical contact with others and direct employees/students and visitors to increase personal space to at least six (6) feet, where possible. Where office spaces are used, only necessary employees should enter the space and all employees should maintain social distancing while inside the office.
- To the extent possible, meetings will be conducted by telephone, zoom, or other alternative means.
- The District understands that due to the nature of our work, access to running water for hand washing may be impracticable in all classrooms. In these situations, the District will provide, if available, alcohol-based hand sanitizers and/or wipes.
- Employees and students should limit the use of shared supplies, devices and equipment. To the extent equipment must be shared, the District will provide alcohol-based wipes to clean equipment before and after use. When cleaning supplies and equipment, consult supervisor for proper cleaning techniques and restrictions.

- The District may divide students/staff into groups where possible so that teaching can continue effectively in the event that one of the divided teams is required to quarantine.
- Employees are encouraged to minimize ride-sharing. While in vehicle, employees must ensure adequate ventilation. Consult transportation director for proper vehicle safety precautions.

B. Employees regarding classrooms

- When employees perform educational activities within classrooms, these work locations present unique hazards with regards to COVID-19 exposures. All such staff members should evaluate the specific hazards when determining best practices related to COVID-19.
- During this work, employees must sanitize the work areas upon arrival, throughout the workday, and immediately before departure. The District will provide appropriate disinfectant for use.
- Employees should ask other occupants to keep a personal distance of six (6) feet at a minimum whenever possible. Staff and students should wash or sanitize hands immediately before and after each class period.

C. Building Visitors

- The number of visitors to the schools, including the offices, will be limited to only those necessary for school business.
- All visitors will be screened in advance of arriving in the offices.

School Cleaning and Disinfecting

The District has instituted regular housekeeping practices, which includes cleaning and disinfecting frequently used supplies, devices and equipment, and other elements of the work environment, where possible. Employees should regularly do the same in their assigned work areas.

- Classrooms and break/lunchroom areas will be cleaned at least once per day. Employees performing cleaning will be issued proper personal protective equipment (“PPE”), such as nitrile, latex, or vinyl gloves and gowns, as recommended by the CDC.

- Any trash collected from the classrooms must be changed frequently by someone wearing nitrile, latex, or vinyl gloves.
- While building level custodial staff, will assist in cleaning, it is the responsibility of everyone to help disinfect between classes and activities.
- Vehicles, Buses and equipment/tools should be cleaned at least once per day and before change in operator or rider.
- The District will ensure that any disinfection shall be conducted using one of the following:
 - Common EPA-registered household disinfectant
 - Alcohol solution with at least 60% alcohol

Attendance Center Exposure Situations

Employee or Student Exhibiting COVID-19 Symptoms

If an employee or student exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, the employee must remain at home until he or she is symptom free for 24 hours (1 full day) without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g., cough suppressants). The District will similarly require an employee that reports to work with symptoms to return home until they are symptom free for 24 hours (1 full day). To the extent practical, employees are required to obtain a doctor's note clearing them to return to work.

Employee or Student Tests Positive for COVID-19

An employee or student that tests positive for COVID-19 will be directed to self-quarantine away from school. Employees or students that test positive and are symptom free may return to school when at least ten (10) days have passed since the date of his or her first positive test, and have not had a subsequent illness. Employees or students exhibiting symptoms that test positive and are directed to care for themselves at home may return to school when: (1) at least 72 hours (3 full days) have passed since recovery;² and (2) and (10) days have passed since symptoms first appeared. Employees or students that test positive and have been hospitalized may return to school when directed to do so by their medical care provider. The District will require an employee to provide documentation clearing their return to work.

Employee or Student Has Close Contact with a Tested Positive COVID-19 Individual

To ensure continuity of operations of essential functions, CDC advises that critical infrastructure workers may be permitted to continue work following potential exposure to COVID-19, provided they remain asymptomatic and additional precautions are implemented to protect them and the community.

A potential exposure means being a household contact or having close contact within 6 feet of an individual with confirmed or suspected COVID-19. The timeframe for having contact with an individual includes the period of time of 48 hours before the individual became symptomatic.

If the District learns that an employee or student has tested positive, the District along with Sherman County Health Department will investigate co-workers or students that may have had close contact with the confirmed-positive employee or student in the prior 14 days and direct those individuals that have had close contact with the confirmed-positive case to self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with the carrier. If an employee or student learns that he or she has come into close contact with a confirmed-positive individual outside of the workplace, he/she must alert a principal or supervisor of the close contact and also self-quarantine for 14 days from the last date of close contact with the carrier.

Human Resources Procedures

If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is reported, the District will assess the situation. The District's assessment will consider the work environment itself, the type of work performed, risk of person-to-person transmission given the work environment, and other factors such as community spread. Further, if an employee has a confirmed case of COVID-19 that is considered work-related, the District will work collaboratively with the individual to report the case to the Sherman County Health Department.

Confidentiality/Privacy

Except for circumstances in which the District is legally required to report workplace occurrences of communicable disease, the confidentiality of all medical conditions will be maintained in accordance with applicable law and to the extent practical under the circumstances. When it is required, the number of persons who will be informed of an employee's condition will be kept at the minimum needed not only to comply with legally-required reporting, but also to assure proper care of the employee and to detect situations where the potential for transmission may increase. A sample notice to employees and student is attached to this Plan. The District reserves the right to inform other employees that a co-worker (without disclosing the person's name) has been diagnosed with COVID-19 if the other employees might have been exposed to the disease so the employees may take measures to protect their own health.

Notification Form

DATE: [DATE]

TO: [CLOSE CONTACT INDIVIDUAL]

FROM: Bill Biermann

We have been informed by one of our [employees/student/vendor/etc] working at USD 352 that he/she has a confirmed case of COVID-19, commonly known as “Coronavirus,” based on test results obtained on [DATE]. Per District policy, this [employee/student/vendor/etc] has been directed to self-quarantine until permitted to return to work.

We are alerting you to this development because, based on the District’s investigation, we believe that you may have come into contact with the confirmed-positive case, on or about [DATE]. Based on District policy we are directing you not to report to work/school (i.e., self-quarantine) until, at least, [14 days from last contact with confirmed case]. In the interim, we encourage you to seek medical advice, communicate with the Sherman County Health Department, and a possible COVID-19 test, especially if you are exhibiting symptoms of the virus.

If you do not test positive for COVID-19, or experience symptoms, by [14 days from last contact with confirmed case], you may return to work. However, please inform building level supervisor if any of the following occur during your self-quarantine: you experience flu-like symptoms, including fever, cough, sneezing, or sore throat; or you test positive for COVID-19.

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all of our students and employees and top-quality service to our community. It is in the interest of those goals that we provide this information out of an abundance of caution.

We also want to take this opportunity to remind you that one of our core values as a district is respect for and among our employees. We will treat information regarding the identity of employees with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 as confidential to the extent feasible and will comply with applicable laws regarding the handling of such information. Further, per District policy, we will not tolerate harassment of, or discrimination or retaliation against, employees.

Please contact Bill Biermann, Superintendent of Schools at (785) 890-2397 if you have any questions or concerns.

COVID-19 Checklist for Students and Employees

Know the Symptoms of COVID-19

- Coughing, fever, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing.
- Early symptoms may include chills, body aches, sore throat, headache, diarrhea, nausea/vomiting, and runny nose. If you develop a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, **DO NOT GO TO WORK** and call your health-care provider immediately. Do the same thing if you come into close contact with someone showing these symptoms.

Employer Responsibilities

- Develop a COVID-19 Exposure Action Plan.
- The district will provide reusable masks to all employees.
- Conduct large meetings by phone if possible. If not, instruct employees to maintain 6-feet between each other. The supervisor/director will track attendance verbally rather than having employees sign an attendance sheet.
- Access to the school will be limited to only those necessary for the school work.
- All visitors will be pre-screened to ensure they are not exhibiting symptoms.
- Employees, students, and visitors will be asked to leave the school and return home if they are showing symptoms.
- Provide hand sanitizer and disinfectants on site.
- Provide protective equipment (PPE) to any employees assigned cleaning/disinfecting tasks.
- Talk with community partners about your response plans. Share best practices with other businesses in your communities.

Employee Responsibilities

- Become familiar with the Exposure Action Plan and follow all elements of the Plan.
- All teachers and staff in classroom setting are required to wear appropriate PPE (masks). Students are encouraged to also wear masks. PPE reusable masks will be provided to staff members by the district for this purpose.
- Practice good hygiene: wash hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If these are not available, use alcohol-based hand rub with at least 60% alcohol. Avoid touching your face, eyes, food, etc. with unwashed hands.

Cleaning/Disinfecting Job Sites and Other Protective Measures

- Clean and disinfect frequently used devices and equipment on a regular basis. This includes other elements of the school where possible. Employees should regularly do the same in their respective work areas.
- Clean shared spaces such as classrooms and break/lunchrooms at least once per day.
- Disinfect shared surfaces (door handles, copiers, light switches etc.) on a regular basis.
- Avoid sharing devices and equipment with others. If not, disinfect before and after each use.
- Trash collected from the school must be changed frequently by someone wearing gloves.

COVID-19 FAQ

What is COVID-19?

The novel coronavirus, COVID-19 is one of seven types of known human coronaviruses. COVID-19, like the MERS and SARS coronaviruses, likely evolved from a virus previously found in animals. The remaining known coronaviruses cause a significant percentage of colds in adults and children, and these are not a serious threat for otherwise healthy adults.

Patients with confirmed COVID-19 infection have reportedly had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms such as fever, cough, and shortness of breath.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services/Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”), Chinese authorities identified an outbreak caused by a novel—or new—coronavirus. The virus can cause mild to severe respiratory illness. The outbreak began in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China, and has spread to a growing number of other countries—including the United States.

How is COVID-19 Spread?

COVID-19, like other viruses, can spread between people. Infected people can spread COVID-19 through their respiratory secretions, especially when they cough or sneeze. According to the CDC, spread from person-to-person is most likely among close contacts (about 6 feet). Person-to-person spread is thought to occur mainly *via* respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes, like how influenza and other respiratory pathogens spread. These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. It is currently unclear if a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes.

In assessing potential hazards, employers should consider whether their workers may encounter someone infected with COVID-19 in the course of their duties. Employers should also determine if workers could be exposed to environments (e.g., worksites) or materials (e.g., laboratory samples, waste) contaminated with the virus.

Depending on the setting, school officials may also rely on identification of sick individuals who have signs, symptoms, and/or a history of travel to COVID-19-affected areas that indicate potential infection with the virus, in order to help identify exposure risks for employees and students and implement appropriate control measures.

There is much more to learn about the transmissibility, severity, and other features associated with COVID-19, and investigations are ongoing.

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