



SAN BENITO COUNTY

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES AGENCY

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Healthy People in Healthy Communities

Date: March 12, 2020

To: School Administration

From: Martin Fenstersheib, MD, MPH, Interim Health Officer

Subject: **San Benito County School Guidance on Novel Coronavirus or COVID-19**

This school guidance is based on what we currently know about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease (COVID-19). It is also based on the degree of local community spread of the virus. To date, there have been two cases of COVID-19, both of which have resolved. However, in Santa Clara County where many residents travel on a daily basis to work, shop, and seek services, there is already extensive community spread of COVID-19. This geographical proximity puts residents here at increased risk for infection.

School officials, along with local public health and government will need to continue monitoring the situation and be ready to make additional modifications as the need arises.

Schools have and can do much to stay prepared and keep students safe. It is everyone's goal to protect the health of the students as well as assuring they continue to receive their ongoing education.

COVID-19 is a new coronavirus. The World Health Organization has now determined we have risen to the level of Pandemic. This means there is sustained spread of this new disease world-wide. We know that symptoms usually begin 2-14 days after exposure. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Eighty percent (80%) of people will experience a mild disease. Those most at risk are those over 65 years of age and those with other underlying chronic illness. Currently there is no vaccine or treatment. It is spread through respiratory droplets such as when you cough or sneeze. It may also live for hours to days on surfaces. It is easily killed with common disinfectants.

What Schools Should Consider Doing Now:

- Suspend and/or postpone field trips.
- Cancel and/or postpone group and large gatherings such as dances, assemblies, after-school classes and sporting events. Athletics games may be played without an audience of spectators.
- Utilize alternative ways to congregate within the school including any large or communal activities such as assemblies. Alternate approaches which limit close contact may include conducting assemblies via webcasts or intercom announcements.
- Limit access to campus to school community only; visitors are interviewed for recent travel history and symptoms.
Stagger recess times to limit the number of students who are together; and if possible, group recess by classrooms.
- Exclude students, teachers, or staff who have a travel history over the course of the last 14 days to an area identified by the CDC as Level 3 Travel Health Notice. Additionally, exclude those who

have been in close contact with someone **diagnosed** with COVID-19 from the school for 14 days from day of exposure.

- Send students, teachers, and staff who present with fever and/or respiratory infection symptoms home immediately. Separate them from others until they go home. When feasible, identify a “sick room” through which others do not pass.
- Increase general cleaning of schools (see [Environmental Cleaning and Disinfection Recommendations](#)).
- Contact SBC Public Health Services at 831-637-5367 immediately if you notice any concerning occurrences of respiratory disease or spikes in absenteeism.
- Coordinate with all partner organizations serving students to ensure consistent practices.
- Have plans to communicate quickly to parents and staff.
- Allow for flexibility on absenteeism policies.
- Review and update comprehensive school safety plans, including continuity plans for teaching and learning if students are absent from school. Review the [SBC PHS Emergency Preparedness School plan on Communicable Management at San Benito County Public Health Services Website](#).
- Enforce personal hygiene measures including hand-washing, covering a cough, and disinfecting surfaces including desks, chairs, computers, books and door handles within the classroom.
- Hand-washing stations should be accessible.
- Provide guidance to parents, teachers and staff reminding them of the importance of community social distancing measures, including discouraging students or staff from gathering elsewhere.

In The Meantime, Prepare in Case of School Closure

- In consultation with the SBC PHS, the appropriate school official may consider school closure is warranted and the length of time based on the risk level within the specific community.
- Implement communication plans and remote learning options for school closure.
- If schools are closed, students should receive clear messages to maintain social distancing thus not congregating with one another during the closure. Students should continue to practice good hygiene and wash hands frequently and refrain from touching their faces.
 - Include information for parents regarding labor laws, information regarding Disability Insurance, Paid Family Leave, and Unemployment Insurance.
 - California Labor and Workforce Development Guidance:
 1. [Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\) Resources for Employers and Workers](#)
 2. The California Employment Development Department’s [Coronavirus 2019 \(COVID-19\) web page](#)
 3. [California Labor Commissioner’s Office FAQs](#)
- Develop a plan for medical and social services, and meal programs and establish alternate mechanisms for these to continue.
 - Meal programs can continue to offer meals when school is closed. More information is available on the [CDE’s Nutrition What’s New web page](#).

- Close school's campuses to students and staff until SBC PHS officials deem the campus safe to open.

We urge schools to ensure students' and staffs' privacy to help prevent discrimination or unnecessary stigmatization. For additional information or questions regarding medically fragile populations, programs, or funding implications, please contact the California Department of Education.

Additional Resources:

- [San Benito County Public Health Services Website](#)
- [California Department of Public Health Website](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Website](#)

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