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## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: COVID-19

*Updated March 16, 2020*

### [Closure of Chicago Public Schools \(CPS\)](#)

**CORRECTION TO PREVIOUS COMMUNICATION:** We are currently working through options for how to best support our hourly and substitute employees regardless of their particular circumstance. Some work irregularly, while others work nearly full-time. We will be communicating further guidance for these employees in the coming days. Please check your CPS email in the coming days.

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## **Closure of Chicago Public Schools (CPS)**

### **Is CPS closed due to COVID-19?**

Yes, on Friday, March 13, 2020, Governor Pritzker announced that all Illinois schools will close beginning Tuesday, March 17 through Monday, March 30. Classes are currently scheduled to resume on Tuesday, March 31. School-sponsored activities, events, field trips, and athletic events are also canceled.

### **Are school buildings open for students and staff?**

No. School buildings will be closed for deep cleaning. Schools will be closed to all students and staff beginning Tuesday, March 17 through Monday, March 30. Only environmental cleaning experts and essential personnel will be allowed in school buildings. Families should not send their children to schools.

### **What is the plan for cleaning schools?**

We will deep clean all schools over the entire duration of the school closure. The scope includes, but is not limited to, cleaning all hard surfaces, flooring, walls, and all high-touch points.

### **Will the district provide food services to students during the closure?**

We recognize that our schools provide healthy meals to many of our students, and we will be providing free food boxes that will contain three days of breakfast and lunches at a time for every student in the household. All families will be able to pick up meals at their nearest CPS school beginning Tuesday, March 17, between 9 a.m and 1 p.m. daily. Lunchroom staff will prep, bag, and provide meals outside of the school building.

### **Will staff be paid during closures?**

All full-time and regularly scheduled staff will continue to be paid through this school closure. Employees designated as Emergency Personnel will be expected to report to work in order to perform essential functions, including food distribution and core operations. Emergency Personnel who are sick or caring

for a sick dependent will be excused with regular pay. Non-Emergency Personnel will be excused with regular pay.

### **Which school staff are designated as Emergency Personnel?**

Emergency Personnel who are required for **food distribution, cleaning, and associated functions** at schools are listed below.

- School Administrators (principals and assistant principals)
  - At least one administrator must report to each school unless sick or caring for a sick dependent. If no administrator is able to report to the school, the principal can request another employee from their school staff who has an administrative license to cover. If this is a teacher, they will be paid the instructional rate for hours worked.
  - Will be paid a 10% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Lunchroom managers
  - Will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Nutrition workers
  - Will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Facilities (all custodians and engineers)
  - All Board employees in this category will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Security staff
  - Will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work

### **Are Central Office and Network employees Emergency Personnel?**

Some Central Office and Network staff employees are Emergency Personnel and may be asked to report to work in-person. All other Central Office and Network staff will be asked to either telework or will be excused with pay.

Emergency Personnel are those who perform **essential district functions**, such as designated payroll and accounting employees who will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days on which they report to work. All other employees in this group will be paid 10% acting pay during this time, excluding any Board-approved Officer. Other non-union employees may be identified as emergency personnel by the CEO or her designee

### **Is the district offering online learning?**

- The guidance for CPS schools is to make their best effort to create contingency plans for enrichment learning opportunities to ensure we are supporting students.
- The district will provide enrichment learning packets and activities for each grade level by Monday, March 16. Schools may opt to use these activities, augment them, or provide their own.
- All schools should identify what enrichment content, projects, activities, and materials are currently available to immediately provide to students.
- Schools should plan to ensure that enrichment content is available to students either **through hard copies or digital resources**. The learning provided must allow for equitable access for all students.
- Currently, CPS does not have provisions to provide state-authorized “E-Learning” days to count towards attendance days according to the state statute (10-19.05). Authorized “E-Learning” days can only be used if the school district can ensure that all students can access the e-learning opportunities equitably, regardless of age, if they have a disability, etc. The district has a wide

variance of engagement with digital tools and platforms, as well as devices, and does not currently have a unified curriculum in place across schools.

- As defined by the state, no one CPS school can independently offer “e-learning” days to count for instructional days; however, schools may supplement learning through digital enrichment opportunities.

### **Will schools serve as polling sites on election day?**

Schools will continue to serve as polling sites as planned. Voters and poll workers will only have access to the designated polling area in school buildings. Deep cleaning at those schools will begin after election day.

### **Who can I contact with questions?**

Please call the CPS Command Center at 773-553-KIDS (5437) or email [familyservices@cps.edu](mailto:familyservices@cps.edu)

### **How will Chicago Public Schools be keeping families, staff, and students informed regarding Coronavirus and information related to the closure?**

CPS is sending regular, if not daily, emails to families and staff to provide the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 and the district website. The district will also post notifications on social media. If you have any questions, please contact the CPS Command Center at [familyservices@cps.edu](mailto:familyservices@cps.edu) or 773-553-KIDS.

### **COVID-19 in CPS**

#### **Are there people in CPS that have tested positive for COVID-19?**

Yes, as of March 16, 2020, two people in CPS have tested positive. As COVID-19 becomes more common here in Chicago we will continue to see more positive both in and around CPS. Please take a moment to review “General COVID-19 Information” below.

#### **Why did CPS decide to close Vaughn and Sheridan?**

Decisions to close schools are at the direction of CDPH. At Vaughn Occupational High School, the staff member who was positive moved through the building while she was working. Also Vaughn is a high school that serves students with higher medical needs. CDPH made the decision to temporarily close the school starting March 9 through March 18 to prevent the spread of the virus. Mark Sheridan Math and Science Elementary School was closed March 16th, one day prior to the mandated school closures. .

### **General COVID-19 Information**

#### **What is coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that can spread from person to person. The most common symptoms of the disease are fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Most people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms but some people will get sicker and may need to be hospitalized.

#### **How can I find the latest news about COVID-19?**

CPS will be sending out regular updates on COVID-19 and will notify the district if this situation develops. For communication purposes, please ensure the district has your up-to-date emergency contact information. For the most reliable information about COVID-19, please visit [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). For school-specific updates, visit [www.cps.edu/coronavirus](http://www.cps.edu/coronavirus).

#### **Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns?**

If you have questions about COVID-19 or concerns about exposure, please email CDPH at [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or call 312-746-4835.

If you have any CPS-specific or school-related concerns, please reach out to the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness at [oshw@cps.edu](mailto:oshw@cps.edu) or by calling the Healthy CPS Hotline 773-553-KIDS (5437) (staffed from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday).

### **Who is at higher risk of severe illness?**

Those at higher risk include:

- People over 60 years of age. The risk increases significantly thereafter and escalates with age, with persons over age 80 in the highest risk category.
- People, regardless of age, with underlying health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems.

### **How do I know if I was exposed?**

You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19,
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19,
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes, OR
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

If you have not been in close contact with a sick person with COVID-19, you are considered to be at low risk for infection. You can continue to go to work and school, but should monitor your health for 14 days and stay away from others if you get sick.

### **What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 but am not sick?**

You should monitor your health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing during the 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. You should not go to work or school, and should avoid public places for 14 days.

### **What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?**

If you get sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing (even if your symptoms are very mild), you should stay at home and away from other people. If you have any of the following conditions that may increase your risk for a serious infection —age 60 years or over, are pregnant, or have medical conditions—contact your physician's office and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. They may want to monitor your health more closely or test you for COVID-19.

If you do not have a high-risk condition but want medical advice, you can call your healthcare provider and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you need to be evaluated in person. There are currently no medications to treat COVID-19. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you may have been exposed to COVID-19. If possible, put on a face mask before emergency medical services arrive or immediately after they arrive.

### **What to do if you have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?**

**Clean your hands often**

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

#### **Clean all “high-touch” surfaces every day**

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product, including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

#### **Monitor your symptoms**

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider’s office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.

Ask your healthcare provider to call CDPH to discuss your situation. Please email CDPH at [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or call 312-746-4835. EMAIL IS PREFERRED. CDPH is experiencing extremely high call volume and we ask for your patience as they may not be able to answer your call promptly.

If your symptoms are severe, such as difficult, rapid, or labored breathing; blueness around your mouth or nails; and/or severe dehydration (dry mouth, pale skin and nails, no tears or urine), please seek the closest emergency department or call 911 immediately. Notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or may have COVID- 19. If possible, put on a face mask before emergency medical services arrive.

#### **Discontinue home isolation**

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and do not require medical attention, you should remain under home isolation precautions for seven days from start of symptoms (if multiple symptoms, then from start of cough) **OR** until 72 hours after fever is gone and symptoms get better, whichever is longer.

If you have fever with cough or difficulty breathing but have **NOT** been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have NOT tested positive for COVID-19, you should stay home away from others until 72 hours after the fever is gone and symptoms get better

#### **How does COVID-19 impact children?**

Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date. Visit CDC for [more information](#). The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in children and adults. However, children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms. It’s not

known yet whether some children may be at higher risk for severe illness, for example, children with underlying medical conditions and special healthcare needs. There is much more to be learned about how the disease impacts children.

## COVID-19 Testing

### Why doesn't CDPH test everyone for COVID-19?

Testing for COVID-19 is only a useful option if someone presents with symptoms of the virus (e.g., fever, cough, and shortness of breath). Because COVID-19 tests are nasal swabs, testing those who are not symptomatic would not provide us with reliable results and potentially, false negatives.

### When should I get tested for COVID-19?

If you are sick, call your medical provider and let them ask you about your symptoms. Your doctor will determine if testing is needed.

### Can I get tested for COVID-19 if I'm not showing symptoms but I have been exposed to someone with the virus?

If you do not show symptoms (fever, cough, and difficulty breathing), testing for COVID-19 is not a useful option and would not provide reliable results. If you have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or if you have traveled to a location, including airport layovers, with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 ([Level 3 Travel Health Notices](#)), you should stay home for 14 days after your return date or date of possible exposure. During this time of home isolation, please monitor yourself for symptoms.

## Preventative Measures

### What actions should I take?

- Washing your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds is best, especially if they are visibly dirty. An alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60 percent alcohol is a suitable alternative.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- For more information, please see this [fact sheet](#) from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

### What if I am sick but have NOT been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have NOT tested positive for COVID-19?

If you have a fever with cough or difficulty breathing, you should stay home, away from others until 72 hours after the fever is gone and symptoms get better.

### Are face masks useful?

CDPH does not recommend that people who are not sick wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. However, face masks **should** be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of face masks is also crucial for health workers and others who are taking care of someone who is sick.

### **When should I self quarantine?**

If you have been in **close contact** with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 or if you have traveled to a location, including airport layovers, with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 ([Level 2 or 3 Travel Health Notices](#)), you should stay home for 14 days after your return date.

### **What should I do if I want to keep my child home for the rest of the school year?**

Homeschooling is suggested if students are planning to stay home for the remainder of the school year. In order to homeschool your child, they would need to be withdrawn from school, and it will be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to ensure their child is being instructed at home. Please note that the school will not send work home for the student and the Illinois State Board of Education does not provide recommendations for materials or provide assistance with planning a home school curriculum. However, we have prepared a list of [resources](#) that may be helpful to review if parents or guardians are unsure where to start.

We request the [homeschooling paperwork](#) be submitted to both the school and the CPS Department of Education Policy and Procedures—you can find specific details on the [website](#). The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) only requests the [Home Schooling Registration Form](#).

Per the [Chicago Board of Education policy](#), homeschooled children are entitled to enroll or re-enroll in CPS, and grade placement decisions for previously homeschooled children will be made at the discretion of school administrators. **Please note:** this enrollment/re-enrollment pertains to neighborhood schools. If a student withdraws from a non-neighborhood school, the student could lose their seat.

## **Staff**

### **What support is available to me?**

If you are experiencing increased stress related to the COVID-19, please contact our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-424-4776 or visit [www.magellanascend.com](http://www.magellanascend.com). If you need assistance locating a primary care provider (PCP), please contact BCBSIL at <http://www.bcbsil.com/members> or 1-800-331-8032. Blue Cross Blue Shield and CVS Caremark have made some modifications to their policies to ensure members can easily access the right care and prescriptions. If you participate in these plans, please [click here](#) for more information.

## **Travel**

### **What is the CDC's current travel guidance?**

*Please note that this guidance is evolving—for the most recent recommendations, please visit the [CDC website](#). Guidance from CDPH is listed below:*

Travelers returning from any country with a [Travel Alert Level 3](#) should stay home and monitor their health for up to 14 days. Please follow instructions during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow the spread of this virus.

Do **not** go to school or work. Absences for this purpose should be excused and alternate arrangements should be made for teleworking and online school assignments.

- Take your temperature with a thermometer 2 times a day and watch your health.
- If you develop a fever (100.4F/38C) or cough, seek medical care right away. Call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them your symptoms and that you were in an affected area. You could also call CDPH at 312-746-7425 (SICK) during business hours, after hours

call 311 and request to speak to the Medical Director on call. In the case of a medical emergency, call 911.

Travelers returning from any country with a [Travel Alert Level 2](#) are also encouraged to monitor their health but do not need to limit their movement or activity. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, contact your healthcare provider, and tell them about your symptoms and your recent travel to an area with community spread of COVID-19.

**What if I recently traveled to an area affected by COVID-19 and got sick?**

If you were in a country with a COVID-19 outbreak and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, within 14 days after you left, you should

- Seek medical advice – Call ahead before you go to a doctor’s office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel on public transportation while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

If you have plans for personal travel to locations with widespread or sustained community transmission of COVID-19 (Level 3 Travel Health Notices), we encourage you to cancel or postpone your plans.

- [Click here](#) for locations with Travel Health Notices. Please continue to check these locations as they are updated regularly.
- If you are unable to cancel or postpone your plans, you may not return to work until you have stayed home without symptoms for 14 calendar days following your return home.

**What should I do if a family member or someone I’ve been in close contact with traveled to a location with widespread community transmission of COVID-19?**

While the person who did travel is required to stay home for 14 days after returning, your exposure is classified as secondary exposure, and you are not required to take any additional steps at this time.

**My international trip on behalf of the district was canceled. When will I be getting a refund?**

The district is currently working with travel vendors to work out refunds for anyone who paid for international trips.

**Resources and Support**

**How do I find medical care?**

If you need help locating medical care, please reach out to the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness at OSHW [@cps.edu](mailto:oshw@cps.edu) or by calling the Healthy CPS Hotline 773-553-KIDS (5437).

**What should I do if I or my child is being bullied or experiencing stigma and discrimination because of COVID-19?**

Bullying, harrassment, and discrimination are always unacceptable. COVID-19 does not distinguish between race, nationality, or geographic borders. Stigma and discrimination against people who have the virus or who have family members with the virus discourages early reporting of symptoms and further perpetuates community spread.

- If there is a concern related to student discrimination or bullying, please reach out to the Office of Student Protections (OSP) by calling 773-535-4400 or by emailing [osp@cps.edu](mailto:osp@cps.edu). You can also contact the Student Safety Center at 773-553-3335.
- If there is a concern related to staff discrimination, please reach out to the Equal Opportunity Compliance Office (EOCO) by calling 773-553-1013 or by emailing [eoco@cps.edu](mailto:eoco@cps.edu).