



March 11, 2020

Dear Families, Employees and Community Members,

Three cases of 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) have been confirmed in Ohio, and we want to provide you an update on ways the virus could affect you and how you can help our communities prepare.

What do I need to know?

Both coronavirus and influenza are spread by close contact between people and respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure and include fever, cough and shortness of breath.

Many people are working on a vaccine for COVID-19, but one will likely not be available for 12-24 months. People can take everyday actions to prevent the spread of these illnesses:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your mouth, nose or eyes. Don't share personal items like water bottles.
- Cover coughs and sneezes with your arm or a tissue.
- Avoid being around people who are sick, and stay home if you are sick.
- Get plenty of sleep and eat well-balanced meals to keep your immune system healthy.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Sick people can wear masks to prevent the spread of illness, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does not recommend them for people who are not experiencing symptoms.

There will be more cases of COVID-19 in the United States in the coming weeks. It's also likely that person-to-person spread will continue in some communities. It's likely that at some point, widespread transmission of COVID-19 in the U.S. will occur.

Widespread transmission of COVID-19 means a large number of people will need medical care at the same time. Public health and health care systems may become overloaded, with elevated rates of hospitalizations and deaths. Schools, childcare centers, workplaces and other places where people gather may experience more absenteeism.

What can I do?

Follow the suggestions on the back of this letter to begin planning now for ways that this illness could impact businesses, schools and other groups.

What can I do to prepare for 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19)?

- Follow your schools' and county health department's websites and social media to get local updates.
- Teach younger children the importance of handwashing, and practice with them.
- Make plans for childcare should schools temporarily close.
- Talk to caregivers about backup plans in the event a primary caregiver becomes ill.
- Keep an adequate supply of water, food, and pet food in your home. If you take prescription medication, contact your health care provider, pharmacist, or insurance provider about keeping an emergency supply at home.
- Meet with immediate family, relatives, friends and neighbors to discuss their needs. Plan ways to care for people at higher risk, including the very young, older people, people with chronic diseases and people with compromised immune systems.
- Keep a working thermometer and respiratory medications like decongestants, expectorants and analgesics (ibuprofen, acetaminophen) on hand.
- Choose a room in your home, and if possible a bathroom, that could be used to separate family members who become sick.
- Be prepared to cancel or postpone your attendance at large events, such as sporting events, conferences and worship services, and to stay away from crowds.
- Be prepared for cancellation or disruptions of public transportation services.
- Get a flu shot this season if you haven't already. It won't protect against COVID-19, but it can help protect against flu or lessen symptoms if you get it, lessening the strain on health care facilities.

Many resources are available from the Ohio Department of Health and CDC, including fact sheets and specific guidance for the public, businesses, schools, health care workers, and community and faith-based organizations. Links are included below.

**Ohio Department of Health Call Center 1-833-427-5634
Open 7 days a week 9:00am-8:00pm for general public**

Resources:

Sandusky County Public Health: <https://www.scpublichealth.com/>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/>

Ohio Department of Health: <http://coronavirus.ohio.gov/>