



February 28, 2020

Dear Superintendent,

We are reaching out to provide you with additional information and resources regarding prevention, detection, and treatment of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), the respiratory disease caused by the novel coronavirus. We know that you are fielding questions from your staff and families, and we want to reassure you that our departments are working closely together to ensure that you have the most up-to-date information to report back to your school communities.

On Thursday, the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) shared [Updated COVID-19 Guidance for School Administrators and School Nurses](#) and [Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Prevent Seasonal Illness and Plan/Respond to COVID-19](#). The CDC is also in the process of developing additional detailed updated guidance for school nurses and school administrators, and we will share that information with superintendents as soon as it is available.

As you likely know, Rhode Island has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 at this time, and the risk to our residents remains low. All travelers from mainland China, the epicenter of COVID-19 cases, are being screened upon entry into the United States, so the likelihood that individuals who have been exposed would be in schools remains extremely low.

The health and safety of our residents – and especially our young people – is of the utmost importance, however, so we will continue to be vigilant in our preparation for any potential impacts of the virus in Rhode Island.

The precautions to prevent the new coronavirus are similar to those used to prevent cold, flu, and norovirus. Students, staff, and school volunteers should be reminded to wash their hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds; avoid touching their eyes, nose, and mouth; cover coughs or sneezes with a tissue or sleeve; stay away from people who are sick, and stay home when you are sick. Schools should likewise follow routine cleaning and disinfection procedures.

If students, staff, or school volunteers come to the nurse's office or present with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, and have traveled from China in the last 14 days, direct the individual to a private room, ask them to wear a face mask, if possible, and close the door. Anyone interacting with that individual should also wear a face mask, and should stand at least six feet away. Call the Rhode Island Department of Health Center for Acute Infectious Disease Epidemiology (CAIDE) at 401-222-2577, or 401-276-8046 after hours, for additional guidance.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is in the process of developing more detailed guidance for schools to help plan and prepare for COVID-19, and respond if there is a local outbreak. We will share that guidance as soon as it is available.

In the meantime, the Department of Health has created a website that is updated regularly with the latest CDC guidance and resources. Visit [health.ri.gov/covid](https://health.ri.gov/covid) to access that information. That page also features COVID-19 fact sheets, available in six languages, which we encourage you to distribute to your staff and families.

Thank you for your support and partnership in getting this message out to school communities, and for your ongoing efforts to keep Rhode Island students and families safe and healthy.

Sincerely,



Dr. Nicole Alexander-Scott  
Director, RI Department of Health



Angélica Infante-Green  
Commissioner of Education