



SOUTH KINGSTOWN SCHOOL DEPARTMENT

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February 28, 2020

An Important Message for Our South Kingstown Learning Community

The South Kingstown School Department recognizes your concerns about the encroaching spread of COVID-19 (Coronavirus) and its potential impact on schools. We are closely following ongoing guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) and the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). In addition, we are working to be diligent with our prevention of the spread of illness in our schools and on our buses.

While at this time there are no confirmed cases in Rhode Island and the risk to our residents remains low (RIDOH, 2/27/2020), we are monitoring new developments and will continue to reevaluate our response and next steps every day. We are also reminding all to **follow common practices to stay healthy and minimize the spread of disease**. These include the practice of social distancing when ill, staying home when exhibiting cold and flu-like symptoms, not returning to school after illness until there is 24 hours of health, wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you are unable to wash, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers. Also avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

The **South Kingstown School Department is working diligently to be proactive**. We are asking our schools to review hand-washing techniques with our students, discouraging the sharing of food and increasing the frequency of school building (and bus) cleaning by maintenance staff. We are prepared to alter our procedures should any situation change but at this time federal health authorities are NOT recommending the closing or canceling of any classes. We are working on our strategies and access to education (including online education). We will communicate any changes should the need arise.

Please note that we take our guidance from the Rhode Island Department of Health, Rhode Island Department of Education and the Centers for Disease Control. We take all directives from these public health agencies. Below you will find the most recent guidance that we have received from RIDOH. We will continue to share this information with our community. **We will continue to update the news on our mainpage of our website** (skschools.net) and encourage those with questions to reach out.

Sincerely,

Linda F. Savastano
Superintendent of Schools



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February 27, 2020

Updated COVID-19 Guidance for School Administrators and School Nurses

*The message below is a Public Health Advisory from the **Rhode Island Department of Health**.*

The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is offering additional information and guidance to school administrators and school nurses regarding infection caused by the new coronavirus, now known as COVID-19, first identified in Wuhan, China in late December 2019. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is in the process of developing guidance for childcare programs, K-12 schools, and colleges/universities to help them plan and prepare for COVID-19 and respond if there is a local outbreak in their community. RIDOH will distribute that guidance as soon as it is available.

At this time, Rhode Island has no confirmed cases of COVID-19 and the risk to our residents remains low. At the same time, the risk for the influenza virus is very high.

The vast majority of reported cases of COVID-19 are in China. Confirmed cases of this respiratory virus associated with travel from Wuhan are also being reported in a growing number of countries, including the United States. Some person-to-person spread of this virus outside China has been detected and the risk to Rhode Island residents remains low at this time; however, it is important for us to be prepared in the event we do start to see community spread of the virus here.

We know that outbreaks of new virus infections are always of public health concern. The Rhode Island Department of Health (RIDOH) is working closely with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), other federal agencies, and our clinical partners to share the most up to date information available.

It is important to note that at this time, Rhode Island residents are much more likely to become sick with a cold, flu, or norovirus than to be exposed to COVID-19. Many of the precautions that help prevent colds, flu, and norovirus can help protect against other respiratory viruses.

Recommended guidance

As of February 3, 2020, travelers from mainland China are arriving into the U.S. at 11 airports (not including Logan airport in Boston) and are being screened upon entry. Travelers who are ill or who have traveled in the high-risk area of Hubei Province are being quarantined at the point of entry. Travelers from other parts of China without symptoms are being told to stay at home for 14 days from day of arrival.

The South Kingstown School Department does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, color, sex (including pregnancy, gender identity, and sexual orientation), parental status, national origin, age, disability, family medical history or genetic information, political affiliation, military service, or other non-merit based factors, in accordance with applicable laws and regulations.



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If students, staff, or volunteers do come to the nurse's office with a fever, cough, or difficulty breathing AND have traveled from China in the last 14 days:

- Place the individual in a private room, ask them to wear a face mask and close the door.
- Ask the individual about symptoms of COVID-19 (fever, cough, difficulty breathing). Other symptoms could include: chills, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, abdominal pain, vomiting, and diarrhea. If you are in the same room as the individual, wear a face mask and stand at least six feet away.
- If the individual requires immediate medical care, call 911 for an ambulance, and inform EMS of the individual's recent travel to China.
- Call the RIDOH Center for Acute Infectious Disease Epidemiology (CAIDE) at 401-222-2577 (401-276-8046 after hours) for additional guidance.

The precautions to help prevent colds and the flu can help protect against COVID-19.

RIDOH recommends that schools continue education about good hygiene. Students, staff, and volunteers should be reminded to:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If unable to wash, use alcohol-based hand sanitizers
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth
- Cover your coughs or sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve (not with your hands)
- Stay away from people who are sick and stay home when you are sick

Schools should follow their regular cleaning and disinfection program.

- Clean hard surfaces (desks, tables, countertops, sinks). Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces (door handles, faucets, railings), bathrooms and health rooms. Use alcohol wipes to clean keyboards.
- Use "EPA-approved" disinfectant to clean high-touch surfaces and patient care areas.
- Clean the surface first to remove all organic matter. Thorough cleaning with soap and water will remove most microorganisms.
- Custodial staff is trained to use disinfectants in a safe and effective manner and to clean up potentially infectious materials and body fluid spills.



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For more information

- RIDOH has created a website updated constantly with the latest CDC guidance and resources. Visit health.ri.gov/covid.
- Rhode Island Department of Health: COVID-19 Fact Sheets available in six languages: [English](#), [Spanish](#), [Chinese](#), [French](#), [Haitian Creole](#), and [Portuguese](#)
- CDC: [Share the Facts, Stop Fear](#)
- CDC: [Frequently Asked Questions and Answers: Coronavirus Disease-2019 \(COVID-19\) and Children](#)
- [CDC Communication Resources](#)
- RIDOH: [Novel Coronavirus Update for School Nurses](#)
- [Novel Coronavirus Update for School Nurse Teachers and Administrators](#)
- Novel Coronavirus Updates: [Novel Coronavirus Update No. 1](#), [Novel Coronavirus Update No. 2](#), [Novel Coronavirus Update No. 3](#)
- Rhode Island Department of Health: [Coronavirus Preparedness and Coordination On-Going in Rhode Island](#) (February 20, 2020 press release)
- CDC: [Interim Guidance for Businesses and Employers to Plan and Respond to Coronavirus Disease \(COVID-19\), February 2020](#)
- Occupational Safety and Health Administration: [Interim guidance to prevent worker exposure to COVID-19](#)
- Center for the Study of Traumatic Stress: [Taking Care of Your Family During Coronavirus and Other Emerging Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)
- Rhode Island Department of Health: [Viruses Don't Discriminate. Neither Should We.](#) (Poster)
- Rhode Island Department of Health: [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (web page, also available in [Spanish](#))
- Rhode Island Department of Health: [RIDOH Monitoring Novel Coronavirus Situation](#) (January 28, 2020 press release)
- CDC: [Coronavirus Disease 2019](#) (web page)
- World Health Organization: [Coronavirus disease \(COVID-19\) outbreak](#) (web page)

Thank you for your help to keep Rhode Island students and school personnel healthy and safe.