



Province of the  
**EASTERN CAPE**  
EDUCATION

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REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA \* Website: [www.ecdoe.gov.za](http://www.ecdoe.gov.za)

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**TO:** DDG-IOM  
DDG-EPEM  
CHIEF DIRECTOR: CLUSTER A  
CHIEF DIRECTOR: CLUSTER B  
ALL OFFICIALS OF THE ECDOE

**FROM:** SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL

**SUBJECT:** PREVENTION AND MANAGEMENT OF CORONAVIRUS  
(COVID-19)

**DATE:** 13 MARCH 2020

**Background**

1. The Eastern Cape Department of Education (the Department) takes cognisance of the fact that the World Health Organisation identified the outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) as a pandemic on 11 March 2020.
2. The Department also takes note of the spread of the virus and the potential effect on South Africa in general, and the potential effect and implications on learners and schools in the province. The Department is not aware of any reported cases of infected persons in the Eastern Cape to date. However, the Department has a constitutional obligation to provide basic education in the province, to create a safe learning environment and to consider that the best interests of the learners are of paramount importance. Without wishing to cause unnecessary fear or alarm on the matter, it is important, in exercising this constitutional obligation, that all officials act responsibly by treating the situation with the necessary care and importance required.

**DBE Circular 1 of 2020**

3. On 12 March 2020 the Department of Basic Education (DBE) issued Circular 1 of 2020, *CONTAINMENT/MANAGEMENT OF COVID 19 FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES*. Find a copy of DBE's circular enclosed. Schools are instructed to study the Circular and to implement its provisions.

4. In addition, all schools in the province are urged to follow the guidelines as provided by the International Federation of the Red Cross (IFRC), UNICEF and the World Health Organisation (WHO) for schools. Enclosed with this circular is a copy of this document as accessed on 12 March 2020 at <https://www.unicef.org/reports/key-messages-actions-coronavirus-disease-prevention-control-school>. School principals are urged to read this document and to take steps to inform, prevent and act responsibly.

#### **Key preventative points**

5. In brief summary, key preventative points for immediate implementation in schools:
  - 5.1.1. Wash hands with soap and water regularly;
  - 5.1.2. Clean and disinfect school surfaces regularly;
  - 5.1.3. Cover mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing;
  - 5.1.4. Promote social distancing (not shaking hands, hugging, sharing utensils, etc.) without stigmatising learners or employees; and
  - 5.1.5. Stay home when sick.

#### **International School Tours and Excursions**

6. Having considered the risks and benefits for ALL learners and employees in our schools, the Head of Department hereby instructs school principals to cancel all **international school tours or excursions** which are scheduled to take place within the next two months (up to 31 May 2020).

#### **Private International Trips – learners**

7. Although the Department does not have authority over international travel organised by private individuals or organisations, the Department requests that Principals shall advise all parents whose children have embarked on international travel to either:
  - 7.1. Remain at home for a period of two weeks after the return from the trip, and to closely monitor the learners; or
  - 7.2. Go for screening and only return to school on medical advice before the period of two weeks.
8. Parents are further advised to follow the protocols and guidelines as set out in the DBE Circular 1 of 2020. Schools must provide support for teaching and learning to take place remotely while learners do not attend school due to adhering to quarantine requirements.

**Private International Trips – officials**

9. Once again, the Department does not have the authority to decide how officials will spend their holidays. Officials are urged to consider cancelling international trips. If not possible to cancel trips, officials are urged to:
  - 9.1. Remain at home for a period of two weeks after return from the international trip and to closely monitor their health; or
  - 9.2. Go for screening and only return to school/office on medical advice before the end of the two-week period.
10. Officials are further advised to follow the protocols and guidelines as set out in the DBE Circular 1 of 2020.
11. As it is a fluid situation, further instructions may be sent through, lifting the restrictions, or in the worst-case scenario, setting out further restrictions. It is of utmost importance that schools access communications daily.
12. District Directors are hereby instructed to ensure that this communication reaches all schools immediately.

Yours faithfully

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**T. KOJANA**  
**SUPERINTENDENT-GENERAL**

13/03/2020  
\_\_\_\_\_  
**DATE**





## basic education

Department:  
Basic Education  
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

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Date: 11 March 2020

**TO: HEADS OF EDUCATION DEPARTMENTS  
HEADS OF COMMUNICATION DEPARTMENTS  
HEADS OF PROVINCIAL GOVERNANCE  
DISTRICT DIRECTORS  
SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES  
TEACHER UNIONS  
ALL SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS  
GOVERNING BODY ASSOCIATIONS**

### **CONTAINMENT/MANAGEMENT OF COVID 19 FOR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL COMMUNITIES**

#### **CIRCULAR NO. 1 OF 2020**

#### **Guidance for childcare facilities and schools on COVID-19**

This guidance is based on what is currently known about the transmission and severity of coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). Guidance will be updated as new information emerges. Please check the National Institute for Communicable Diseases (NICD) website ([www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)) for updated guidance.

Schools can play an important role in efforts to control the spread of COVID-19. Schools can take steps to circulate information about the disease and its potential transmission within their school community. Schools can prepare to take steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19 among their learners and staff should health officials identify such a need.

School plans should be designed to minimise disruption to teaching and learning and protect learners and staff from social stigma and discrimination. Plans can build on everyday practices (e.g. encouraging hand hygiene, monitoring absenteeism and communicating routinely).

#### **Who is this guidance for?**

This interim guidance is intended to help administrators of childcare facilities and primary and high schools (hereafter referred to as schools) prevent the spread of COVID-19 among learners and staff.

#### **Why is this guidance being issued?**

Information provided should help schools understand how to help prevent the transmission of COVID-19 within school communities and facilities. It also aims to help schools react quickly should a case be identified. The guidance includes considerations to help administrators plan for the continuity of teaching and learning if there is a need to quarantine learners or staff within schools or close schools as a result of the spread of COVID-19.



## What is the role of schools in responding to COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) virus, and we are learning more about it every day. There is currently no vaccine to protect against COVID-19. At this point, the best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to the virus that causes it. Stopping transmission (spread) of the virus through everyday practices is the best way to keep people healthy. More information on COVID-19 is available here [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za); [www.health.gov.za](http://www.health.gov.za) and [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za).

Schools, working together with local health departments, have an important role in slowing the spread of diseases to help ensure learners have safe and healthy learning environments.

To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for schools to do now is **plan and prepare**. As the global outbreak evolves, schools should prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks as well as possible recommendations from health officials for learners, staff or whole classes or grades to be quarantined at home. School dismissal could be recommended in certain circumstances. Decisions about appropriate public health interventions should always be made in discussion with public health officials who have access to all the relevant information. These decisions include:

1. Whether learners or educators should remain home from school for a period of time; and
2. Whether learners in sections of a school or a whole school should be dismissed.

Keeping learners at home from school or closing schools is a serious decision which may restrict the learners' ability to acquire education as well as have knock-on effects in terms of the need for childcare. All decisions for learners to stay home from school based on possible exposure to or infection with COVID-19 should be justified by available scientific evidence.

Schools want to **be ready** if COVID-19 does appear in their communities.

**School administrators can take steps to help stop or slow the spread of respiratory infectious diseases, including COVID-19:**

- **Make sure that everyone in the school has up to date information on how to prevent the spread of COVID-19 (link to NICD, [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za), guidance on handwashing etc.)**
- **Monitor and plan for absenteeism**
  - Review attendance and sick leave policies. Encourage learners and staff to stay home when sick. Use flexibility, when possible, to allow staff to stay home to care for sick family members.
  - Discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives as these may encourage people to come to school sick.
  - Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff.
  - Determine what level of absenteeism will disrupt continuity of teaching and learning.
- **Establish procedures for learners and staff who are sick at school**
  - Establish procedures to follow when learners and staff become sick at school or arrive at school sick, as they should be sent home as soon as possible.
  - Keep sick learners and staff separate from well learners and staff until they can leave.
  - Remember that schools are not expected to screen learners or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If



a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.

- Share resources with the school community to help families understand when to keep learners at home.
- **Create communication plans for use with the school community.**
  - Include strategies for sharing information with staff, learners, and their families.
  - Include information about steps being taken by the school or childcare facility to prepare, and how additional information will be shared.

**School administrators can also support their school community by sharing resources with staff, families and, age-appropriately, with learners.** Consider sharing the following fact sheets and information sources found on the NICD website [www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za) and the DBE website [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za) such as the Frequently asked Questions on COVID-19.

**Learners who plan to travel, or have recently traveled, to areas with community spread of COVID-19.** South Africa has not implemented any specific travel restrictions. While the risks of contracting COVID-19 infection are generally low and the consequences in most cases are mild, there are other associated risks of international travel. This includes cancelled flights, new travel restrictions and/or airport closures and possible quarantine in the event you come into contact with a suspected case. The risk of travel disruptions or acquiring COVID-19 in a foreign location varies by location and the risk situation is rapidly evolving. It is not possible to predict the level of risk in any location in the future. If members of school communities become infected during travel, they could potentially introduce COVID-19 into the community on return. The NICD has developed guidance on quarantine including guidance on appropriate precautions to take when returning from travel in affected countries and these should be followed ([www.nicd.ac.za](http://www.nicd.ac.za)). In light of this, staff and learners who will be travelling internationally (including school tours) in the next months should reconsider the benefits and risks of undertaking such travel. Schools may need to postpone or cancel trips that could expose learners and staff to potential community spread of COVID-19. Learners returning from travel to areas with community spread of COVID-19 must follow guidance on the NICD website. **Schools can also consult with local health officials or call the NICD community hotline to discuss travel concerns 0800 029 999.**

**Learners who may have been exposed to a suspected case of COVID-19.** If anyone has been in contact with a suspected case in a childcare facility or school, no restrictions or special control measures are required while laboratory test results for COVID-19 are awaited. There is no need to close the setting or send other learners or staff home. As a precautionary measure, the NICD are currently testing a very large number of people who have travelled back from affected countries, the vast majority of whom test negative. Therefore, until the outcome of test results is known there is no action that staff members need to take.

**Learners who may have been exposed to a confirmed case of COVID-19.** All close contacts of a confirmed COVID-19 case are required to self-quarantine at home for 14 days while being monitored for symptoms. They may not attend school. Learners who are not contacts of a confirmed case should not be prevented from attending school. Family and friends who have not had close contact with the original confirmed case do not need to take any precautions or make any changes to their own activities such as attending childcare or educational settings or work, unless they become unwell. Specifically learners who have interacted with a healthy contact of a confirmed case should not be excluded from school. The reason for this is that asymptomatic spread of COVID-19, if it occurs is likely very uncommon. Meaning, for a person who comes into contact with a healthy contact of a case, it is very unlikely to result in transmission. All case contacts who become symptomatic will be immediately screened for COVID-19 and if found to be a case, active contact tracing and self-quarantine of all contacts will be implemented.

### **Action to be taken when a case of COVID-19 (Learner or staff) is confirmed in your childcare facility or school**

- The childcare or educational institution will be contacted by the relevant public health officials to discuss the case, identify people who have been in contact with them and advise on any actions or precautions that should be taken. If you have not yet been contacted please contact the public hotline 0800 029 999 who will refer you to the relevant contact.
- An assessment of each childcare or education institution will be undertaken by the public health officials with relevant staff. Advice on the management of learners and staff will be based on this assessment.
- If there is a confirmed case, a risk assessment will be undertaken by the educational establishment with advice from the public health officials. In most cases, closure of the facility or school will be unnecessary. This decision will be facility or school specific, based on various factors such as establishment size and pupil mixing.

### **Prepare for possible school dismissal. This should only be considered following recommendations from a public health official.**

Temporarily closing schools is a possible strategy to stop or slow the further spread of COVID-19 in communities. School administrators should work in close collaboration and coordination with health officials to make dismissal and large event cancellation decisions. Schools are not expected to make decisions about dismissal or canceling events on their own. Schools can seek specific guidance from health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps. Large event cancellations or school dismissals may be recommended for 14 days, or possibly longer if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., scope, duration) may change as the local situation evolves.

During school dismissals, childcare programmes and schools may stay open for staff members (unless ill) while learners stay home. Keeping facilities open will allow educators to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning. Furthermore, it would allow other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts.

### **If schools are dismissed, schools can consider the following steps:**

- **Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events.**
  - Cancel or postpone events such as field trips, and sporting events.
- **Discourage learners and staff from gathering or socialising anywhere.**
  - Discourage gatherings at places like a friend's house, a favourite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.
- **Ensure continuity of education.**
  - Review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching and learning. Implement e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.
  - If necessary, determine, in consultation with school district officials or other relevant state or local partners:
    - How to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and how to train educators to do so;
    - How to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff;
    - How to encourage appropriate adult supervision while learners are using distance learning approaches; and
    - How to deal with the potential lack of learners' access to computers and the Internet at home.



- **Ensure continuity of meal programmes, if applicable.**
  - Consider ways to distribute food to learners through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP); and
  - If there is community spread of COVID-19, design strategies to avoid distribution in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd. Consider options such as “grab-and-go” bagged lunches or meal delivery.

### **How to clean educational establishments where there were learners, staff or others with suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19**

Coronavirus symptoms are similar to a flu-like illness and include cough, fever, or shortness of breath. Once symptomatic, all surfaces that the suspected case has come into contact with must be cleaned using disposable cloths and household detergents.

These include:

- all surfaces and objects which are visibly contaminated with body fluids; and
- all potentially contaminated high-contact areas such as toilets, door handles, telephones, etc.

Public areas where a symptomatic individual has passed through and spent minimal time in (such as corridors) but which are not visibly contaminated with body fluids do not need to be specially cleaned and disinfected. If a person becomes ill in a shared space, these should be cleaned as detailed above.

### **What to do with rubbish in the educational establishment, including tissues, if learners, staff or others within the institution become unwell with suspected COVID-19**

All waste that has been in contact with the individual, including used tissues, and masks if used, should be put in a plastic rubbish bag and tied when full. The plastic bag should then be placed in a second bin bag and tied. It can then be put in the normal waste.

Below follows the contact details of the Provincial Health Department Communicable Diseases Directorates:

<b>Provincial Communicable Disease Control Directorate</b>			
Eastern Cape	Thomas Dlamini Nosimphiwo Mgobo	<a href="mailto:thomas.dlamini@echealth.gov.za">thomas.dlamini@echealth.gov.za</a> <a href="mailto:Nosimphiwo.Mgobo@echealth.gov.za">Nosimphiwo.Mgobo@echealth.gov.za</a>	083 378 0189 060 579 9027
Free State	Dikeledi Baleni Babsy Nyokong	<a href="mailto:balenid@fshealth.gov.za">balenid@fshealth.gov.za</a> <a href="mailto:nyokongb@fshealth.gov.za">nyokongb@fshealth.gov.za</a>	083 757 8217 082 463 7499
Gauteng	Chika Asomugha Caroline Kesebilwe	<a href="mailto:Chika.Asomugha@gauteng.gov.za">Chika.Asomugha@gauteng.gov.za</a> <a href="mailto:Caroline.kesebilwe@gauteng.gov.za">Caroline.kesebilwe@gauteng.gov.za</a>	082 330 1490 083 490 8165
KwaZulu-Natal	Premi Govender	<a href="mailto:premi.govender@kznhealth.gov.za">premi.govender@kznhealth.gov.za</a>	071 609 2505
Limpopo	Marlene Freda Ngobeni Mashudu P. Mudau	<a href="mailto:Marlene.Ngobeni@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za">Marlene.Ngobeni@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za</a> <a href="mailto:Prudence.Mudau@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za">Prudence.Mudau@dhsd.limpopo.gov.za</a>	079 491 1909 071 678 3864
Mpumalanga	Mandla Zwane Hluphi Mpangane	<a href="mailto:MandlaZw@mpuhealth.gov.za">MandlaZw@mpuhealth.gov.za</a> <a href="mailto:hluphim@mpuhealth.gov.za">hluphim@mpuhealth.gov.za</a>	082 229 8893 076 522 8511 / 013 766 3411
North West	Chriseldah Lebeko	<a href="mailto:clebeko@nwpg.gov.za">clebeko@nwpg.gov.za</a>	082 421 7985
Northern Cape	Gloria Hottie	<a href="mailto:hottieg@webmail.co.za">hottieg@webmail.co.za</a>	072 391 3345 / 053 830 0529
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<b>Port Health and Environmental Health</b>			
Central Region (Gauteng, Free State, Northern Cape)	Funeka Bongweni	<a href="mailto:Funeka.Bongweni@health.gov.za">Funeka.Bongweni@health.gov.za</a>	012 395 9728 060 993 0107
Northern Region (Limpopo, Mpumalanga, North West)	Ockert Jacobs	<a href="mailto:Ockert.Jacobs@health.gov.za">Ockert.Jacobs@health.gov.za</a>	012 395 9417 082 372 0556
Coastal Region (KwaZulu-Natal, Northern Cape, Western Cape)	Antoinette Hargreaves	<a href="mailto:Antoinette.Hargreaves@health.gov.za">Antoinette.Hargreaves@health.gov.za</a>	031 301 0381 083 460 0935

It is imperative that school communities are aware of the basic health and safety precautions as mentioned throughout the circular. This circular must be implemented immediately within all South African schools and applies to all entities and individuals that may come within the school premises.

Provincial Education Departments are obliged to ensure compliance as well as that resources are made available to secure schools and protect the health of school communities.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'HM Mweli', written in a cursive style.

**MR HM MWELI**  
**DIRECTOR-GENERAL**  
**DATE: 11/03/2020**



# Key Messages and Actions for COVID-19 Prevention and Control in Schools

March 2020



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# I. FACTS ABOUT COVID-19

## **What is COVID-19?**

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a new strain of coronavirus. 'CO' stands for corona, 'VI' for virus, and 'D' for disease. Formerly, this disease was referred to as '2019 novel coronavirus' or '2019-nCoV.' The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold.

## **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Symptoms can include fever, cough and shortness of breath. In more severe cases, infection can cause pneumonia or breathing difficulties. More rarely, the disease can be fatal. These symptoms are similar to the flu (influenza) or the common cold, which are a lot more common than COVID-19. This is why testing is required to confirm if someone has COVID-19.

## **How does COVID-19 spread?**

The virus is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from and touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). The COVID-19 virus may survive on surfaces for several hours, but simple disinfectants can kill it.

## **Who is most at risk?**

We are learning more about how COVID-19 affects people every day. Older people, and people with chronic medical conditions, such as diabetes and heart disease, appear to be more at risk of developing severe symptoms. As this is a new virus, we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there are relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. This is a new virus and we need to learn more about how it affects children. The virus can be fatal in rare cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

## **What is the treatment for COVID-19?**

There is no currently available vaccine for COVID-19. However, many of the symptoms can be treated and getting early care from a healthcare provider can make the disease less dangerous. There are several clinical trials that are being conducted to evaluate potential therapeutics for COVID-19.

## **How can the spread of COVID-19 be slowed down or prevented?**

As with other respiratory infections like the flu or the common cold, public health measures are critical to slow the spread of illnesses. Public health measures are everyday preventive actions that include:

- ✓ staying home when sick;
- ✓ covering mouth and nose with flexed elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing. Dispose of used tissue immediately;
- ✓ washing hands often with soap and water; and
- ✓ cleaning frequently touched surfaces and objects.

As we learn more about COVID-19 public health officials may recommend additional actions.



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## II. INTRODUCTION

The outbreak of coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has been declared a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and the virus has now spread to many countries and territories. While a lot is still unknown about the virus that causes COVID-19, we do know that it is transmitted through direct contact with respiratory droplets of an infected person (generated through coughing and sneezing). Individuals can also be infected from touching surfaces contaminated with the virus and touching their face (e.g., eyes, nose, mouth). While COVID-19 continues to spread it is important that communities take action to prevent further transmission, reduce the impacts of the outbreak and support control measures.

The protection of children and educational facilities is particularly important. Precautions are necessary to prevent the potential spread of COVID-19 in school settings; however, care must also be taken to avoid stigmatizing students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus. It is important to remember that COVID-19 does not differentiate between borders, ethnicities, disability status, age or gender. Education settings should continue to be welcoming, respectful, inclusive, and supportive environments to all. Measures taken by schools can prevent the entry and spread of COVID-19 by students and staff who may have been exposed to the virus, while minimizing disruption and protecting students and staff from discrimination.

### Purpose

Today, children and young people are global citizens, powerful agents of change and the next generation of caregivers, scientists, and doctors. Any crisis presents the opportunity to help them learn, cultivate compassion and increase resilience while building a safer and more caring community. Having information and facts about COVID-19 **will help diminish students' fears and anxieties around the disease** and support their ability to cope with any secondary impacts in their lives. This guidance provides key messages and considerations for engaging school administrators, teachers and staff, parents, caregivers and community members, as well as children themselves in promoting safe and healthy schools.

The purpose of this document is to provide clear and actionable guidance for safe operations through the prevention, early detection and control of COVID-19 in schools and other educational facilities. The guidance, while specific to countries that have already confirmed the transmission of COVID-19, is still relevant in all other contexts. Education can encourage students to become advocates for disease prevention and control at home, in school, and in their community by talking to others about how to prevent the spread of viruses. Maintaining safe school operations or reopening schools after a closure requires many considerations but, if done well, can promote public health.



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## III. SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS AND STAFF

### Key Messages & Actions

#### Basic principles

Following basic principles can help keep students, teachers, and staff safe at school and help stop the spread of this disease. Recommendations for healthy schools are:

- Sick students, teachers and other staff should not come to school
- Schools should enforce regular hand washing with safe water and soap, alcohol rub/hand sanitizer or chlorine solution and, at a minimum, daily disinfection and cleaning of school surfaces
- Schools should provide water, sanitation and waste management facilities and follow environmental cleaning and decontamination procedures
- Schools should promote social distancing (a term applied to certain actions that are taken to slow down the spread of a highly contagious disease, including limiting large groups of people coming together)

#### Know the latest facts

Understand basic information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as UNICEF, WHO and national health ministry advisories. Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.

#### Ensure safe school operations

See 'Checklist on Safe School Environments' below

Update or develop school emergency and contingency plans. Work with officials to guarantee schools are not used as shelters, treatment units, etc. Consider cancelling any community events/meetings that usually take place on school premises, based on risk.

Reinforce frequent handwashing and sanitation and procure needed supplies. Prepare and maintain handwashing stations with soap and water, and if possible, place alcohol-based hand rub (hand sanitizers) in each classroom, at entrances and exits, and near lunchrooms and toilets.

Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.)

Implement social distancing practices that may include:

- Staggering the beginning and end of the school day
- Cancelling assemblies, sports games and other events that create crowded conditions
- When possible, **create space for children's desks to be at least one metre apart**
- Teach and model creating space and avoiding unnecessary touching

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#### Establish procedures if students or staff become unwell

Plan ahead with local health authorities, school health staff and update emergency contact lists. Ensure a procedure for separating sick students and staff from those who are well – without creating stigma – and a process for informing parents/caregivers, and consulting with health care providers/health authorities wherever possible. Students/staff may need to be referred directly to a health facility, depending on the situation/context, or sent home. Share procedures with staff, parents and students ahead of time.

#### Promote information sharing

Coordinate and follow guidelines from the national health and education authorities. Share known information with staff, caregivers and students, providing updated information on the disease situation, including prevention and control efforts at school. Reinforce that caregivers should alert the school and health care authorities if someone in their home has been diagnosed with COVID-19 and keep their child at home. Utilize parent-teacher committees and other mechanisms to promote information sharing. Also be sure to address children's questions and concerns, including through the development of child-friendly materials such as posters which can be placed on notice boards, in restrooms, and other central locations.

#### Adapt school policies where appropriate

Develop flexible attendance and sick leave policies that encourage students and staff to stay home when sick or when caring for sick family members. Discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives. Identify critical job functions and positions, and plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff. Plan for possible academic calendar changes, particularly in relation to breaks and exams.

#### Monitor school attendance

Implement school absenteeism monitoring systems to track student and staff absence and compare against usual absenteeism patterns at the school. Alert local health authorities about large increases in student and staff absenteeism due to respiratory illnesses.

#### Plan for continuity of learning

In the case of absenteeism/sick leave or temporary school closures, support continued access to quality education. This can include:

- Use of online/e-learning strategies
- Assigning reading and exercises for home study
- Radio, podcast or television broadcasts of academic content
- Assigning teachers to conduct remote daily or weekly follow up with students
- Review/develop accelerated education strategies

#### Implement targeted health education

Integrate disease prevention and control in daily activities and lessons. Ensure content is age-, gender-, ethnicity-, and disability-responsive and activities are built into existing subjects. (See Section on Age-Appropriate Health Education)



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#### Address Mental Health/Psychosocial support needs

Encourage children to discuss their questions and concerns. Explain it is normal that they may experience different reactions and encourage them to talk to teachers if they have any questions or concerns. Provide information in an honest, age-appropriate manner. Guide students on how to support their peers and prevent exclusion and bullying. Ensure teachers are aware of local resources for their own well-being. Work with school health workers/social workers to identify and support students and staff who exhibit signs of distress.

#### Support vulnerable populations

Work with social service systems to ensure continuity of critical services that may take place in schools such as health screenings, feeding programs or therapies for children with special needs. Consider the specific needs of children with disabilities, and how marginalized populations may be more acutely impacted by the illness or its secondary effects. Examine any specific implications for girls that may increase their risk, such as responsibility for taking care of the sick at home, or exploitation when out of school.

### **CHECKLIST FOR SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS, TEACHERS AND STAFF**

- ☐ 1. Promote and demonstrate regular hand washing and positive hygiene behaviors and monitor their uptake. Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets for girls and boys
  - Ensure soap and safe water is available at age-appropriate hand washing stations
  - Encourage frequent and thorough washing (at least 20 seconds)
  - Place hand sanitizers in toilets, classrooms, halls, and near exits where possible
  - Ensure adequate, clean and separate toilets or latrines for girls and boys
- ☐ 2. Clean and disinfect school buildings, classrooms and especially water and sanitation facilities at least once a day, particularly surfaces that are touched by many people (railings, lunch tables, sports equipment, door and window handles, toys, teaching and learning aids etc.)
  - Use sodium hypochlorite at 0.5% (equivalent 5000ppm) for disinfecting surfaces and 70% ethyl alcohol for disinfection of small items, and ensure appropriate equipment for cleaning staff
- ☐ 3. Increase air flow and ventilation where climate allows (open windows, use air conditioning where available, etc.)
- ☐ 4. Post signs encouraging good hand and respiratory hygiene practices
- ☐ 5. Ensure trash is removed daily and disposed of safely



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## IV. PARENTS/CAREGIVERS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### Key Messages and Actions

COVID-19 is a new virus and we are still learning about how it affects children. We know it is possible for people of any age to be infected with the virus, but so far there have been relatively few cases of COVID-19 reported among children. The virus can be fatal in cases, so far mainly among older people with pre-existing medical conditions.

#### Know the latest facts

Understand basic information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as UNICEF and WHO and national health ministry advisories. Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.

#### Recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 (coughing, fever, shortness of breath) in your child

Seek medical advice by first calling your health facility/provider and then take your child in, if advised. Remember that symptoms of COVID-19 such as cough or fever can be similar to those of the flu, or the common cold, which are a lot more common. If your child is sick, keep them home from school and notify the school of your child's absence and symptoms. Request reading and assignments so that students can continue learning while at home. Explain to your child what is happening in simple words and reassure them that they are safe.

#### Keep children in school when healthy

If your child isn't displaying any symptoms such as a fever or cough it's best to keep them in school – unless a public health advisory or other relevant warning or official advice has been issued affecting your child's school.

Instead of keeping children out of school, teach them good hand and respiratory hygiene practices for school and elsewhere, like frequent handwashing (see below), covering a cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or tissue, then throwing away the tissue into a closed bin, and not touching their eyes, mouths or noses if they haven't properly washed their hands.

#### Washing hands properly

Step 1: Wet hands with safe running water

Step 2: Apply enough soap to cover wet hands

Step 3: Scrub all surfaces of the hands – including backs of hands, between fingers and under nails – for at least 20 seconds

Step 4: Rinse thoroughly with running water

Step 5: Dry hands with a clean, dry cloth, single-use towel or hand drier as available

Wash your hands often, especially before and after eating; after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing; going to the bathroom/ toilets/latrines and whenever your hands are visibly dirty. If soap

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and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty.

#### Help children cope with the stress

Children may respond to stress in different ways. Common responses include having difficulties sleeping, bedwetting, having pain in the stomach or head, and being anxious, withdrawn, angry, clingy or afraid to be left alone. Respond to children's reactions in a supportive way and explain to them that they are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Listen to their concerns and take time to comfort them and give them affection, reassure them they're safe and praise them frequently.

If possible, create opportunities for children to play and relax. Keep regular routines and schedules as much as possible, especially before they go to sleep, or help create new ones in a new environment. Provide age-appropriate facts about what has happened, explain what is going on and give them clear examples on what they can do to help protect themselves and others from infection. Share information about what could happen in a reassuring way.

For example, if your child is feeling sick and staying at home or the hospital, you could say, "You have to stay at home/at the hospital because it is safer for you and your friends. I know it is hard (maybe scary or even boring) at times, but we need to follow the rules to keep ourselves and others safe. Things will go back to normal soon."

### **CHECKLIST FOR PARENTS/CAREGIVERS & COMMUNITY MEMBERS**

- ☐ 1. Monitor your child's health and keep them home from school if they are ill
- ☐ 2. Teach and model good hygiene practices for your children
  - Wash your hands with soap and safe water frequently. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water, if hands are visibly dirty
  - Ensure that safe drinking water is available and toilets or latrines are clean and available at home
  - Ensure waste is safely collected, stored and disposed of
  - Cough and sneeze into a tissue or your elbow and avoid touching your face, eyes, mouth, nose
- ☐ 3. Encourage your children to ask questions and express their feelings with you and their teachers. Remember that your child may have different reactions to stress; be patient and understanding.
- ☐ 4. Prevent stigma by using facts and reminding students to be considerate of one another
- ☐ 5. Coordinate with the school to receive information and ask how you can support school safety efforts (though parent-teacher committees, etc.)



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## V. STUDENTS AND CHILDREN

Children and young people should understand basic, age-appropriate information about coronavirus disease (COVID-19), including its symptoms, complications, how it is transmitted and how to prevent transmission. Stay informed about COVID-19 through reputable sources such as UNICEF, WHO and national health ministry advisories. Be aware of fake information/myths that may circulate by word-of-mouth or online.

### CHECKLIST FOR STUDENTS AND CHILDREN

- ☐ 1. In a situation like this it is normal to feel sad, worried, confused, scared or angry. Know that you are not alone and talk to someone you trust, like your parent or teacher so that you can help keep yourself and your school safe and healthy.
  - Ask questions, educate yourself and get information from reliable sources
- ☐ 2. Protect yourself and others
  - Wash your hands frequently, always with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
  - Remember to not touch your face
  - Do not share cups, eating utensils, food or drinks with others
- ☐ 3. Be a leader in keeping yourself, your school, family and community healthy.
  - Share what you learn about preventing disease with your family and friends, especially with younger children
  - Model good practices such as sneezing or coughing into your elbow and washing your hands, especially for younger family members
- ☐ 4. Don't stigmatize your peers or tease anyone about being sick; remember that the virus doesn't follow geographical boundaries, ethnicities, age or ability or gender.
- ☐ 5. Tell your parents, another family member, or a caregiver if you feel sick, and ask to stay home.

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## Age-specific health education

Below are suggestions on how to engage students of different ages on preventing and controlling the spread of COVID-19 and other viruses. Activities should be contextualized further based on the specific needs of children (language, ability, gender, etc.).

### Preschool

- Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands frequently
- Sing a song while washing hands to practice the recommended 20 second duration.
  - Children can “practice” washing their hands with hand sanitizer
- Develop a way to track hand washing and reward for frequent/timely hand washing
- Use puppets or dolls to demonstrate symptoms (sneezing, coughing, fever) and what to do if they feel sick (i.e. their head hurts, their stomach hurts, they feel hot or extra tired) and how to comfort someone who is sick (cultivating empathy and safe caring behaviors)
- Have children sit further apart from one another, have them practice stretching their arms out or ‘flap their wings’, they should keep enough space to not touch their friends.

### Primary School

- Make sure to listen to children’s concerns and answer their questions in an age-appropriate manner; don’t overwhelm them with too much information. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings. Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain that these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation.
- Emphasize that children can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
  - Introduce the concept of social distancing (standing further away from friends, avoiding large crowds, not touching people if you don’t need to, etc.)
  - Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands
- Help children understand the basic concepts of disease prevention and control. Use exercises that demonstrate how germs can spread. For example, by putting colored water in a spray bottle and spraying over a piece of white paper. Observe how far the droplets travel.
- Demonstrate why it is important to wash hands for 20 seconds with soap and water
  - Put a small amount of glitter in students’ hands and have them wash them with just water, notice how much glitter remains, then have them wash for 20 seconds with soap and water
- Have students analyze texts to identify high risk behaviors and suggest modifying behaviors



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- For example, a teacher comes to school with a cold. He sneezes and covers it with his hand. He shakes hands with a colleague. He wipes his hands after with a handkerchief then goes to class to teach. What did the teacher do that was risky? What should he have done instead?

## Lower Secondary School

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.
- Emphasize that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
  - Introduce the concept of social distancing
  - Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing hands
  - Remind students that they can model healthy behaviors for their families
- Encourage students to prevent and address stigma
  - Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings
- **Build students' agency and have them promote facts about public health.**
  - Have students make their own Public Service Announcements through school announcements and posters
- Incorporate relevant health education into other subjects
  - Science can cover the study of viruses, disease transmission and the importance of vaccinations
  - Social studies can focus on the history of pandemics and evolution of policies on public health and safety
  - Media literacy lessons can empower students to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens

## Upper Secondary School

- Make sure to listen to students' concerns and answer their questions.
- Emphasize that students can do a lot to keep themselves and others safe.
  - Introduce the concept of social distancing
- - Focus on good health behaviors, such as covering coughs and sneezes with the elbow and washing handsEncourage students to prevent and address stigma
  - Discuss the different reactions they may experience and explain these are normal reactions to an abnormal situation. Encourage them to express and communicate their feelings.
- Incorporate relevant health education into other subjects
  - Science courses can cover the study of viruses, disease transmission and the

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- importance of vaccinations
  - Social studies can focus on the history of pandemics and their secondary effects and investigate how public policies can promote tolerance and social cohesion.
  - Have students make their own Public Service Announcements via social media, radio or even local tv broadcasting
    - Media literacy lessons can empower students to be critical thinkers and makers, effective communicators and active citizens.

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