



Department of  
**Public Health**  
CITY OF PHILADELPHIA

## School Guidance to Prevent the Spread of Coronavirus

Although no cases of coronavirus infection have been identified in Philadelphia as of March 6, 2020, it is possible that in the future, widespread transmission of coronavirus (COVID-19) will occur in the City of Philadelphia and surrounding regions. Children are often at higher risk for respiratory viruses and, through play and care-giving activities, readily spread viruses to others. Students on college and university campuses also have more opportunities for close contact through dormitory living and social activities.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has published guidance to schools in the United States on how to prepare for and manage infection with coronavirus:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>

In Philadelphia, the Department of Public Health recommends the following to slow the spread of infection:

- Advise students and staff to practice behaviors that can prevent the spread of respiratory viruses, especially including hand washing, covering coughs, and remaining at home when ill.
- Regularly disinfect high-touch surfaces in classrooms and common areas.
- Provide access to hand washing supplies, such as sinks supplied with soap and alcohol-based hand sanitizer stations.

In addition, the Department of Public Health recommends that schools prepare for the possibility of high rates of illness among students and staff in the future.

- Develop plans on how essential operations could be maintained if there were a period of weeks with high levels of absenteeism among students and staff.
- Establish plans to provide some form of education at home for students who cannot attend school.

If community transmission of the coronavirus were to become established in Philadelphia, it is *possible* that closure of one school, multiple schools, or all schools would help reduce or slow the spread of the virus. However, for the COVID-19 coronavirus, children appear to be at relatively low risk for illness, and closure of schools would be disruptive for families. At this point, the Health Department is unlikely to recommend school closure unless information were to become available showing that children play a significant role in community transmission and that school closure would have a substantial benefit in protecting residents.