



NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Interim Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) Guidance for Local Education Agencies and Public Schools

Updated March 31, 2020

This guidance is to help our local education agencies (LEAs) and public schools minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19 among both staff and children and families receiving meals and other services. To reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission in our community, K-12 public schools in North Carolina are closed [by order of the Governor](#) until May 15, 2020. Many children in our state depend on the school setting to receive meals and our school nutrition programs are essential to address food insecurity in the community. As part of the COVID-19 response, meeting the needs of children and families and providing nutritious meals to children during school closure is a priority. The below guidance is provided to assist LEAs and public schools as they continue to operate and serve our children and families.

Staying Safe in the Workplace

- Employers and employees should use teleworking technologies to the greatest extent possible, stagger work schedules, and consider canceling non-essential travel.
- Workplaces should hold larger meetings virtually, to the extent possible. **Note that while Executive Order 121, issued by Governor Cooper on March 27, 2020, bans the mass gatherings of 10 or more people in a single room or a single space at one time, this does not apply to COVID-19 Essential Business or Operation such as LEAs and educational institutions.**
- Employers should arrange any needed in-person workspaces to optimize distance between employees ideally at least six feet apart (i.e., social distancing). As directed in Executive Order 121, “social distancing requirements” include:
 - maintaining at least six (6)-feet distancing from other individuals;
 - washing hands using soap and water for at least twenty (20) seconds as frequently as possible or the use of hand sanitizer;
 - regularly cleaning high touch surfaces.
- Employers should urge high-risk and sick employees to stay home and maximize flexibility in sick leave benefits (see further guidance below).

Staying Healthy

The same steps that a facility would take to prevent the spread of any other respiratory illness, such as flu, will also reduce the likelihood of COVID-19 transmission.

Precautions that all staff should take include:

- Stay home when sick.**
- Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds (about as long as it takes to sing “Happy Birthday” twice). In addition to usual handwashing, make sure to wash hands:
 - before and after preparing or eating meals and snacks;
 - after blowing noses, coughing, or sneezing, or when in contact with body fluids; and
 - after toileting.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, and mouth.

- Cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue.
- Except for eating, preparing, or serving food, hand sanitizing products with 60% alcohol may be used in lieu of handwashing if hands are washed as soon as possible afterwards.
- If you are NOT sick or caring for someone who is sick, the CDC does NOT recommend wearing a facemask. Facemasks may be in short supply and they are needed for those who have symptoms, their caregivers, and health care personnel.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces throughout the day and at night. Follow regular cleaning protocols and use an [EPA-registered disinfectant that is active against coronaviruses](#).
- If possible, ask staff each day if they have had symptoms of respiratory illness (fever, cough, shortness of breath).
- If a staff member develops the following symptoms, send them home as soon as possible:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness of breath
- Recommend exclusion for staff who are considered high-risk:
 - Older adults, ≥ 65 years of age
 - Other high-risk conditions could include:
 - People with chronic lung disease or moderate to severe asthma
 - People who have heart disease with complications
 - People who are immunocompromised including cancer treatment
 - People of any age with severe obesity (body mass index [(BMI) ≥ 40] or certain underlying medical conditions, particularly if not well controlled, such as those with diabetes, renal failure, or liver disease might also be at risk
- People who are pregnant should be monitored since they are known to be at risk with severe viral illness, however, to date data on COVID-19 has not shown increased risk.
- Ensure that the facility has flexible sick leave and absentee policies that do not encourage people to come in while sick.

When Someone is Sick

- Those with a temperature greater than 100.4 F should stay home until they have had no fever for 3 days without the use of fever-reducing medications (e.g., acetaminophen, ibuprofen).
- Anyone suspected to have or has been diagnosed with COVID-19 should remain isolated at home until at least 7 days after symptom onset AND ≥ 72 hours after symptom resolution (absence of fever without the use of fever-reducing medication and improvement in respiratory symptoms), whichever is longer.
- Individuals who have had close contact (e.g., household member) with a person with respiratory illness are encouraged to stay at home and monitor themselves for symptoms (i.e. fever, cough, shortness of breath), limit outside interaction as much as possible, and self-isolate if he/she develops symptoms. Individuals should monitor for the development of symptoms for 14 days following the last date of exposure to the ill person while that person was sick.

Be Prepared

- [Stay informed](#) about the COVID-19 outbreak.
- Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 in [children](#) and [adults](#). Children typically have milder disease than adults.
- Plan ahead in case of changes.

For more information, please see the following sources:

- [NC COVID-19 website](#)
- [CDC COVID-19 website](#)
- [Food Safety Guidance for School Meal Delivery](#)
- [Food Safety Information](#)
- [How to Safely Prepare Boxed Meals](#)
- [NC environmental cleaning guidance](#)
- [CDC guidance for schools and childcare facilities](#)