Irwin County Schools Coronavirus (COVID-19)/Pandemic Response Plan

March 12, 2020

Basic Plan

Irwin County Schools is working with local, state, and federal health care officials and monitoring the CDC website for any changes in status regarding the novel coronavirus or COVID-19. At this time the CDC recommends guidelines and precautions similar to the flu. Information in this document was obtained from the World Health Organization, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, GA Department of Education, and Georgia Department of Public Health.

Irwin County Schools have preventative measures in place. All nursing staff, educators, and administrators have been updated. In the event of a pandemic, Irwin County Schools will follow the direction of the Georgia Department of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and WHO.

Basic Information:

Human Coronavirus Types:

Coronaviruses are named for the crown-like spikes on their surface. There are four main subgroupings of coronaviruses, known as alpha, beta, gamma, and delta.

Human coronaviruses were first identified in the mid-1960's. The seven coronaviruses that can infect people are:

Common human coronaviruses

- 229E (alpha coronavirus)
- NL63 (alpha coronavirus)
- OC43 (beta coronavirus)
- HKU1 (beta coronavirus)

Other human coronaviruses

- MERS-CoV (the beta coronavirus that causes Middle East Respiratory Syndrome, or MERS)

- SARS-CoV (the beta coronavirus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome, or SARS)
- SARS-CoV-2 (the novel coronavirus that causes coronavirus disease 2019, or COVID-19)

People around the world commonly get infected with human coronaviruses 229E, NL63, OC43, and HKU1.

Sometimes coronaviruses that infect animals can evolve and make people sick and become a new human coronavirus. Three recent examples of this are 2019-nCoV, SARS-CoV, and MERS-CoV.

CDC is responding to an outbreak of respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China, which has now been detected internationally, including cases in the United States. The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19"). (cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/summary)

The CDC states that individual risk is dependent on exposure.

- For the general American public, who are unlikely to be exposed to this virus at this time, the immediate health risk is considered low.
- Under current circumstances, certain people will have an increased risk of infection, for example, healthcare workers caring for patients with COVID-19 and other close contacts of persons with COVID-19.

Plan for identified cases of COVID-19 within our community

If local health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in our community, our first step in this situation is to talk with local health officials. The guidance provided here is based on current knowledge of COVID-19. As additional information becomes available about the virus, how it spreads, and how severe it is, this guidance may be updated.

Irwin County Schools is working in close collaboration and coordination with local health officials. In the event of reported cases, we will continue to work with local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long our schools may need to be closed.

If an ill student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case:

- Local health officials may recommend temporary school dismissals/closures if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case. Local health officials' recommendations for the scope and duration of school dismissals/closure will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the impacted community.
- Irwin County Schools will work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure. This communication to the school community will align with the communication plan in the school's emergency operations plan. In such a circumstance, it is critical to maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
- Irwin County Schools principals will identify safe rooms where students exhibiting symptoms can be held until a parent can arrive to take them to a healthcare provider. If an employee is exhibiting symptoms, they will be allowed to go home immediately and students in that class will be held in a safe room while that class is sterilized. We urge all students and employees that are ill to stay home and to seek medical care.
- If a student or staff member has been identified with COVID-19, Irwin County Schools will seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to schools and what additional steps are needed for the school community. In addition, students and staff who are well but are taking care of or share a home with someone with a case of COVID-19 should follow instructions from local health officials to determine when to return to school.
- Irwin County Schools will monitor all future travel for field trips, organizational trips and athletic events that are to areas that COVID 19 exposure has been identified.
- Irwin County Schools will have an alternative education plan in place for any extended closure that last longer than 3 or 5 days with online instruction as well as hard copies being available as well?
- Irwin County Schools will provide laptops/chromebooks for teachers only to assist in facilitating online instruction during an extended closure if needed.

Remember that schools are not expected to screen students 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.

Main Talking Points

How COVID-19 Spreads

Person-to-person spread

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet)
- Via respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.

Spread from contact with infected surfaces or objects

- It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

When does spread happen?

- People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread might be possible before people show symptoms; there have been reports of this with this new coronavirus, but this is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads.

Symptoms

For confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. This is based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of MERS-CoV viruses.

Prevention

There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC/WHO always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Avoid shaking hands and hugging.
- Stay home when you are sick. If you have a fever, cough, and difficulty breathing, seek medical attention and call in advance. Follow the directions of your local health authority.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- 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.
- Make sure you, and the people around you, follow good respiratory hygiene. This means covering your mouth and nose with your bent elbow or tissue when you cough or sneeze. Then dispose of the used tissue immediately.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
- CDC does not recommend that people who are well to wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.htmland people who are taking care of someone in close settings https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html(at home or in a health care facility).
- Stay informed on the latest developments about COVID-19. Follow advice given by your healthcare provider, and your national and local public health authority on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

Disease Basics

Q: What is a novel coronavirus?

A: A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified. The virus causing coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19), is not that same as the coronaviruses that commonly circulate among humans and cause mild illness, like the common cold.

A diagnosis with coronavirus 229E, NL63, OC43, or HKU1 is not the same as a COVID-19 diagnosis. Patients with COVID-19 will be evaluated and cared for differently than patients with common coronavirus diagnosis.

Q: What is the source of COVID-19?

A: Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some cause illness in people, and others, such as canine and feline coronaviruses, only infect animals. Rarely, animal coronaviruses that infect animals have emerged to infect people and can spread between people. This is suspected to have occurred for the virus that causes COVID-19. Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) are two other examples of coronaviruses that originated from animals and then spread to people.

Q: How does the virus causing Coronavirus Disease-2019 (COVID-19), spread?

A: This virus was first detected in Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China. The first infections were linked to a live animal market, but the virus is now spreading from person-to-person. It's important to note that person-to-person spread can happen on a continuum. Some viruses are highly contagious (like measles), while other viruses are less so. Currently, it's unclear how easily or sustainably this virus is spreading between people.

Q: Is the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 the same as the MERS-CoV or the SARS-CoV virus?

A: No. Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. Some coronaviruses cause cold-like illnesses in people. Others cause illness in certain types of animals, such as cattle, camels and bats. Rarely, animal coronaviruses can spread to people. This happened with SARS-CoV and MERS-CoV. The virus that causes COVID-19 likely also originated in an animal and spread to humans. The coronavirus most similar to the virus causing COVID-19 is SARS-CoV. There are ongoing investigations to learn more. The situation is changing, and information will be updated as it becomes available.

Q: Can someone who has had COVID-19 spread the illness to others?

A: The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading from person-to-person. Someone who is actively sick with COVID-19 can spread the illness to others. That is why CDC recommends that these patients be isolated either in the hospital or at home (depending on how sick they are) until they are better and no longer pose a risk of infecting others.

How long someone is actively sick can vary so the decision on when to release someone from isolation is made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with doctors, infection prevention and control experts, and public health officials and involves considering specifics of each situation including disease severity, illness signs and symptoms, and results of laboratory testing for that patient.

Current CDC guidance for when it is ok to release someone from isolation https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/disposition-hospitalized-patients.html is made on a case by case basis and includes meeting all of the following requirements:

- The patient is free from fever without the use of fever-reducing medications.
- The patient is no longer showing symptoms, including cough.
- The patient has tested negative on at least two consecutive respiratory specimens collected at least 24 hours apart.

Someone who has been released from isolation is not considered to pose a risk of infection to others.

Stigma

Q: Why might someone blame or avoid individuals and groups (create stigma) because of COVID-19?

A. People in the U.S. may be worried or anxious about friends and relatives who are living in or visiting areas where COVID-19 is spreading. Some people are worried about the disease. Fear and anxiety can lead to social stigma, for example, towards Chinese or other Asian Americans or people who were in quarantine.

Stigma is discrimination against an identifiable group of people, a place, or a nation. Stigma is associated with a lack of knowledge about how COVID-19 spreads, a need to blame someone, fears about disease and death, and gossip that spreads rumors and myths.

Stigma hurts everyone by creating more fear or anger towards ordinary people instead of the disease that is causing the problem.

Q: How can people help stop stigma related to COVID-19?

A: People can fight stigma and help, not hurt, others by providing social support. Counter stigma by learning and sharing facts. Communicating the facts that viruses do not target specific racial or ethnic groups and how COVID-19 actually spreads can help stop stigma.

Q: What should I do if I had close contact with someone who has COVID-19?

A: There is information for people who have had close contact with a person confirmed to have, or being evaluated for, COVID-19 available online.

Q: Does CDC recommend the use of facemask in the community to prevent COVID-19?

A: CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19. You should only wear a mask if a healthcare professional recommends it. A facemask should be used by people who have COVID-19 and are showing symptoms. This is to protect others from the risk of getting infected. The use of facemasks also is crucial for health workers https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.htmland other people who are taking care of someone infected with COVID-19 in close settingshttps://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html (at home or in a health care facility).

Medical Information

Q: What are the symptoms and complications that COVID-19 can cause?

A: For confirmed coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms can include:

Fever

Cough

Shortness of breath

CDC believes at this time that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 days after exposure. This is based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of MERS-CoV viruses.

Prevention

Q: How can you help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and other germs and viruses?

A: There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

• Avoid close contact with people who are sick.

• Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.

• Stay home when you are sick.

• Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.

• Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

• Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.

• CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.

• Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for health workers https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/hcp/infection-control.htmland people who are taking care of someone in close settings https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/guidance-home-care.html(at home or in a health care facility).

• Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.

• 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.