

# HOOKSETT MEMORIAL SCHOOL

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**Stephen HARRIS, Principal**  
**Anne Kelly, Assistant Principal**

**Jessica Jordan, School Counselor**  
**Lea Maguire, School Counselor**

March 2, 2020

Dear HMS Families,

In recent days, the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and other public health agencies have indicated concerns about the worldwide outbreak of COVID-19 (coronavirus). A CDC official recently advised parents and students to familiarize themselves with their school's plans to employ preventive measures to help prevent the spread of the virus.

Superintendent Rearick has directed our maintenance staff to disinfect all common areas on a daily basis. These areas include student's desks, library tables, lavatories, and all other areas where groups of students and teachers may travel and congregate during the school day. The lunchroom tables will be disinfected after every lunch. The Superintendent has also directed the maintenance staff to order hand sanitizer, soap, and tissues for every classroom. Reserve supplies have also been ordered.

***Please read the following information carefully.***

**What is the difference between seasonal coronaviruses and the virus causing COVID-19 and how is it spread?** Coronaviruses are a family of closely related viruses. Some coronaviruses cause the common cold but the virus causing COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus that we believe moved from animals into humans and is infecting people for the first time. This virus spreads primarily through respiratory droplets such as occur when an infected person coughs. Risk for transmission between people is highest with close contact (e.g., family members, healthcare settings).

**What are common symptoms of COVID-19 and how is it prevented or treated?**

For confirmed COVID-19 cases, reported illnesses have ranged from mild symptoms to severe illness and death. Symptoms typically include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Currently, there is no vaccine to prevent infection with this virus, and there is no specific antiviral treatment recommended once infected. The best way to prevent infection is to avoid being exposed to this virus.

**How should schools, colleges and universities prepare for the potential of COVID-19 in their communities?**

- Continue to monitor information from public health. See key websites at the end of this document.
- Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans. See CDC guidance below.
- Actively encourage sick students, staff, and volunteers to stay home and emphasize respiratory etiquette and frequent hand hygiene by all.
- Residential schools should consider identifying a place where an ill student(s) can safely reside apart, if necessary. This should be a single room with access to private bathroom.
- Perform routine and frequent environmental cleaning, especially of commonly touched surfaces.
- Create communications plans, including strategies for sharing information with staff, volunteers, students, and their families. Consider proactive communications now. See examples at the end of this document.

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- Prepare for possible increased numbers of student and employee absences.
- Identify essential functions, essential jobs or roles, and critical elements to maintain school operations.
- Plan to minimize exposure between people if public health officials call for social distancing (e.g. consider student seating arrangements to allow for the greatest distance possible between students, implement distance learning, etc.)

Review CDC COVID-19 guidance for schools: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html>

Review NH DPHS and CDC guidance for businesses and other organizations to help prepare for community transmission of COVID-19: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/documents/covid-19-businesses.pdf>.

**See informational handout on self-observation that can be provided to travelers at the end of this document.**

## **What should be done for those who become sick at school?**

If students, staff or volunteers come to the nurse's office or health services with a fever, cough, shortness of breath, or other respiratory symptoms AND have traveled from any locations with any travel notices for COVID-19 in the 14 days prior to symptom onset OR had recent close contact with a person suspected to be infected with COVID-19, do the following:

- Avoid close contact (i.e., avoid being within 6 feet of the individual).
- Place a face mask on the individual, put them in a private room, and close the door.
- Ask the individual about symptoms of COVID-19 (e.g., fever, cough, shortness of breath). Other symptoms could include: chills, sore throat, headache, muscle aches, and less commonly gastrointestinal symptoms such as diarrhea.
- Minimize contact, but if you must be in the same room as the individual, wear a face mask and gloves and stand at least 6 feet away. If your school provides health services and/or has access to personal protective equipment (PPE), every attempt should be made to don all recommended PPE for suspected COVID-19 patients, including those for airborne, droplet, and contact precautions (i.e. N95 respirator, eye protection, gloves, gown and mask).
- If the individual requires immediate medical care, call 911 for an ambulance and inform emergency medical services about the individual's recent travel.
- Call NH DPHS at 603-271-4496 (after-hours 603-271-5300) for additional guidance.

## **What will happen if a person in our school is diagnosed with COVID-19?**

If a student, staff member, or volunteer in your school is diagnosed with COVID-19, NH DPHS will work very closely with your school to identify close contacts of the person diagnosed and to coordinate messaging to your school community. NH DPHS will make recommendations for monitoring of close contacts, which will depend on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in the state at that time.

## **At what point will NH DPHS consider closing a school or cancelling school events due to COVID-19?**

Preemptive school dismissals can be used to disrupt transmission of influenza by reducing close contact before many students and staff members become ill. During a dismissal, the school facilities are kept

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open, which allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning. Decisions around whether or not to implement school closure and event cancellation strategies would be highly dependent on the epidemiology of COVID-19 in New Hampshire and would involve many considerations that balance potential benefits against potential harms. We cannot predict how COVID-19 will occur here in New Hampshire. While the hope is that community transmission will be limited and that school closures would never be required, NH DPHS recommends that schools take steps to review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching and learning, in the event that a school closure is necessary for COVID-19.

### **What cleaning supplies and practices should be used for COVID-19?**

Schools, colleges and universities should routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces such as desks, tables, chairs and doorknobs. No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time. Use cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces can be wiped down before each use.

### **What information can we provide to children about COVID-19?**

Two resources that may be helpful in talking to children about COVID-19 are listed below:

- [Talking with Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks](#)
- [Just For Kids: A Comic Exploring The New Coronavirus](#)

### **Where can I go for the most up-to-date information about the COVID-19 outbreak?**

Outbreaks involving COVID-19 evolve quickly and recommendations from public health officials may change as new information becomes available. Please check the following websites often for updated information:

- U.S. CDC website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019ncov/summary.html>
- NH DPHS website: <https://www.dhhs.nh.gov/dphs/cdcs/2019-ncov.htm>

We will continue to provide updates related to the COVID-19 situation as needed. Information will also be updated on the [school district's website](#) and through BrightArrow. This situation is fluid, and we will continue to monitor and adapt to changing recommendations as they occur. Administration, school nurses, school counselors, and others are available for students and families with concerns or questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "S. Harris".

Stephen HARRIS  
HMS Principal