

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS: COVID-19

*Updated March 23, 2020*

### [Closure of Chicago Public Schools \(CPS\)](#)

**CORRECTION TO PREVIOUS COMMUNICATION:** We are currently working through options for how to best support our hourly and substitute employees regardless of their particular circumstance. Some work irregularly, while others work nearly full-time. We will be communicating further guidance for these employees in the coming days. Please check your CPS email in the coming days.

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#### **Is CPS closed due to COVID-19?**

Governor Pritzker issued a stay-at-home order starting Saturday, March 21 at 5 p.m. through April 7, 2020. Mayor Lightfoot has ordered that CPS remain closed through Monday, April 20, and all Chicago parks and libraries are now closed to slow the spread of COVID-19.

#### **Are school buildings open for students and staff?**

No. School buildings will be closed for deep cleaning. Schools will be closed to all students and staff beginning Tuesday, March 17 through Monday, April 20. Only environmental cleaning experts and emergency personnel will be allowed in school buildings. Families should not send their children to schools.

#### **What is the plan for cleaning schools?**

We will deep clean all schools over the entire duration of the school closure. The scope includes, but is not limited to, cleaning all hard surfaces, flooring, walls, and all high-touch points.

#### **Will the district provide food services to students during the closure?**

We recognize that our schools provide healthy meals to many of our students, and we will be providing free food boxes that will contain three days of breakfast and lunches at a time for every student in the household. All families will be able to pick up meals at their nearest CPS school beginning Tuesday, March 17, between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. daily. Lunchroom staff will prep, bag, and provide meals outside of the school building.

#### **Will staff be paid during closures?**

All full-time and regularly scheduled staff will continue to be paid through this school closure. Employees designated as Emergency Personnel will be expected to report to work in order to perform essential

functions, including food distribution and core operations. Emergency Personnel who are sick or caring for a sick dependent will be excused with regular pay. Non-Emergency Personnel will be excused with regular pay.

### **Which school staff are designated as Emergency Personnel?**

Emergency Personnel who are required for **food distribution, cleaning, and associated functions** at schools are listed below.

- School Administrators (principals and assistant principals)
  - At least one administrator must report to each school unless sick or caring for a sick dependent. If no administrator is able to report to the school, the principal can request another employee from their school staff who has an administrative license to cover. If this is a teacher, they will be paid the instructional rate for hours worked.
  - Will be paid a 10% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Lunchroom managers
  - Will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Nutrition workers
  - Will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Facilities (all custodians and engineers)
  - All Board employees in this category will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work
- Security staff
  - Will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days they report to work

### **Are Central Office and Network employees Emergency Personnel?**

Some Central Office and Network staff employees are Emergency Personnel and may be asked to report to work in-person. All other Central Office and Network staff will be asked to either telework or will be excused with pay.

Emergency Personnel are those who perform **essential district functions**, such as designated payroll and accounting employees who will be paid a 50% premium on top of their regular pay for days on which they report to work. All other employees in this group will be paid 10% acting pay during this time, excluding any Board-approved Officer. Other non-union employees may be identified as emergency personnel by the CEO or her designee

### **Is the district offering online learning?**

- The guidance for CPS schools is to make their best effort to create contingency plans for enrichment learning opportunities to ensure we are supporting students.
- Visit our website to access these [resources](#).
- Schools may opt to use these activities, augment them, or provide their own.
- Schools should plan to ensure that enrichment content is available to students either **through hard copies or digital resources**. The learning provided must allow for equitable access for all students.
- Currently, CPS does not have provisions to provide state-authorized “E-Learning” days to count towards attendance days according to the state statute (10-19.05). Authorized “E-Learning” days can only be used if the school district can ensure that all students can access the e-learning opportunities equitably, regardless of age, if they have a disability, etc. The district has a wide variance of engagement with digital tools and platforms, as well as devices, and does not currently have a unified curriculum in place across schools.

- As defined by the state, no one CPS school can independently offer “e-learning” days to count for instructional days; however, schools may supplement learning through digital enrichment opportunities.

### **Who can I contact with questions?**

Please call the CPS Command Center at 773-553-KIDS (5437) or email [familyservices@cps.edu](mailto:familyservices@cps.edu)

### **How will Chicago Public Schools be keeping families, staff, and students informed regarding Coronavirus and information related to the closure?**

CPS is sending regular emails to families and staff to provide the most up-to-date information regarding COVID-19 and the district website. The district will also post notifications on social media. If you have any questions, please contact the CPS Command Center at [familyservices@cps.edu](mailto:familyservices@cps.edu) or 773-553-KIDS.

### **COVID-19 in CPS**

#### **Are there people in CPS that have tested positive for COVID-19?**

Yes, as of March 16, 2020, two people in CPS have tested positive. As COVID-19 becomes more common here in Chicago we will continue to see more positive both in and around CPS. Please take a moment to review “General COVID-19 Information” below.

#### **Why did CPS decide to close Vaughn and Sheridan?**

Decisions to close schools are at the direction of CDPH. At Vaughn Occupational High School, the staff member who was positive moved through the building while she was working. Also Vaughn is a high school that serves students with higher medical needs. CDPH made the decision to temporarily close the school starting March 9 through March 18 to prevent the spread of the virus. Mark Sheridan Math and Science Elementary School was closed March 16th, one day prior to the mandated school closures.

### **General COVID-19 Information**

#### **What is Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19)?**

COVID-19 is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Symptoms include fever, cough and difficulty breathing. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as long as 14 days after exposure. At this time, there is no vaccine to protect against COVID-19 and no medications approved to treat it. The best way to prevent infection is to take everyday preventive actions, like avoiding close contact with people who are sick and washing your hands often.

The latest situation summary updates are available on CDC’s web page [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#).

#### **How does the virus spread?**

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. People are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).

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.

**How is COVID-19 treated?**

There is no specific medicine to treat COVID-19 infection at this time, though studies are underway. People sick with COVID-19 should receive supportive care from a healthcare professional. Supportive care means care to help relieve symptoms; for example, medicine to bring down fevers, or oxygen if a patient's oxygen level is low.

**How is COVID-19 diagnosed?**

Diagnosis occurs through laboratory testing of respiratory specimens and serum (blood). Some coronavirus strains cause the common cold and patients tested by their health care provider may test positive for these types.

**How can I find the latest news about COVID-19?**

CPS will be sending out regular updates on COVID-19 and will notify the district if this situation develops. For communication purposes, please ensure the district has your up-to-date emergency contact information. For the most reliable information about COVID-19, please visit [www.chicago.gov/coronavirus](http://www.chicago.gov/coronavirus) or [www.cdc.gov/coronavirus](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus). For school-specific updates, visit [www.cps.edu/coronavirus](http://www.cps.edu/coronavirus).

**Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns?**

The Chicago Department of Health has established a call center to address questions from the public. CDPH can be reached at [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or call 312-746-4835. Phone lines are currently staffed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m, seven days a week. Please note that this call center can not access COVID-19 testing results. For testing inquiries or results, please contact your healthcare provider.

If you have any CPS-specific or school-related concerns, please reach out to the CPS Command Center by calling the Healthy CPS Hotline 773-553-KIDS (5437) (staffed from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday) or by emailing [familyservices@cps.edu](mailto:familyservices@cps.edu).

**How do I know if I was exposed?**

You generally need to be in close contact with a sick person to get infected. Close contact includes:

- Living in the same household as a sick person with COVID-19,
- Caring for a sick person with COVID-19,
- Being within 6 feet of a sick person with COVID-19 for about 10 minutes, OR
- Being in direct contact with secretions from a sick person with COVID-19 (e.g., being coughed on, kissing, sharing utensils, etc.).

If you have not been in close contact with a sick person with COVID-19, you are considered to be at low risk for infection. You can continue to go to work and school, but should monitor your health for 14 days and stay away from others if you get sick.

**What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 but am not sick?**

You should monitor your health for fever, cough and difficulty breathing during the 14 days after the last day you were in close contact with the sick person with COVID-19. You should not go to work or school, and should avoid public places for 14 days.

**What should I do if I am a close contact to someone with COVID-19 and get sick?**

If you get sick with fever, cough or difficulty breathing (even if your symptoms are very mild), you should stay at home and away from other people. If you have any of the following conditions that may increase your risk for a serious infection—age 60 years or over, are pregnant, or have medical conditions—contact your physician’s office and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. They may want to monitor your health more closely or test you for COVID-19.

If you do not have a high-risk condition but want medical advice, you can call your healthcare provider and tell them that you were exposed to someone with COVID-19. Your healthcare provider can help you decide if you need to be evaluated in person. There are currently no medications to treat COVID-19. If you have a medical emergency and need to call 911, notify the dispatch personnel that you may have been exposed to COVID-19. If possible, put on a face mask before emergency medical services arrive or immediately after they arrive.

**Who is at higher risk of severe illness?**

Those at higher risk include:

- People over 60 years of age. The risk increases significantly thereafter and escalates with age, with persons over age 80 in the highest risk category.
- People, regardless of age, with underlying health conditions including cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer, heart disease, or chronic lung diseases like COPD, as well as those with severely weakened immune systems.

**What to do if you have confirmed or suspected COVID-19?****Clean your hands often**

Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, clean your hands with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol, covering all surfaces of your hands and rubbing them together until they feel dry. Soap and water is preferred if hands are visibly dirty. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

**Clean all “high-touch” surfaces every day**

High touch surfaces include counters, tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables. Also, clean any surfaces that may have blood, stool, or body fluids on them. Use a household cleaning spray or wipe, according to the label instructions. Labels contain instructions for safe and effective use of the cleaning product, including precautions you should take when applying the product, such as wearing gloves and making sure you have good ventilation during use of the product.

**Monitor your symptoms**

Seek prompt medical attention if your illness is worsening (e.g., difficulty breathing). Before seeking care, call your healthcare provider and tell them that you have, or are being evaluated for, COVID-19. Put on a facemask before you enter the facility. These steps will help the healthcare provider’s office to keep other people in the office or waiting room from getting infected or exposed.

Ask your healthcare provider to call CDPH to discuss your situation. Please email CDPH at [coronavirus@chicago.gov](mailto:coronavirus@chicago.gov) or call 312-746-4835. EMAIL IS PREFERRED. CDPH is experiencing

extremely high call volume and we ask for your patience as they may not be able to answer your call promptly.

If your symptoms are severe, such as difficult, rapid, or labored breathing; blueness around your mouth or nails; and/or severe dehydration (dry mouth, pale skin and nails, no tears or urine), please seek the closest emergency department or call 911 immediately. Notify the dispatch personnel that you have, or may have COVID-19. If possible, put on a face mask before emergency medical services arrive.

### **Continue home isolation precautions**

If you have tested positive for COVID-19 or have symptoms consistent with COVID-19 and do not require medical attention, you should remain under home isolation precautions for seven days from start of symptoms (if multiple symptoms, then from start of cough) **OR** until 72 hours after fever is gone and symptoms get better, whichever is longer.

If you have fever with cough or difficulty breathing but have **NOT** been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have NOT tested positive for COVID-19, you should stay home away from others until 72 hours after the fever is gone and symptoms get better

### **How does COVID-19 impact children?**

Based on available evidence, children do not appear to be at higher risk for COVID-19 than adults. While some children and infants have been sick with COVID-19, adults make up most of the known cases to date. Visit CDC for [more information](#). The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar in children and adults. However, children with confirmed COVID-19 have generally presented with mild symptoms. It's not known yet whether some children may be at higher risk for severe illness, for example, children with underlying medical conditions and special healthcare needs. There is much more to be learned about how the disease impacts children.

### **COVID-19 Testing**

#### **Should I go to my doctor and get tested for COVID-19?**

If you have any of the conditions that may increase your risk for a serious viral infection—age 60 years or over, are pregnant, or have medical conditions—call your physician's office and ask if you need to be evaluated in person. They may want to monitor your health more closely or test you for COVID-19.

If you do NOT have a high-risk condition and your symptoms are mild, you do NOT need to be evaluated in person and do NOT need to be tested for COVID-19. You will receive the same advice whether or not you have a test. For example, there is no special medicine available for treating COVID-19. Most importantly, you must stay home away from others for:

- at least 7 days since your symptoms first appeared; and,
- at least 3 days (72 hours) since recovery defined as no fever (without using fever-reducing medications) and improvement in symptoms.

For example, if you have a fever and coughing for 4 days, you need to stay home 3 more days with no fever for a total of 7 days. Or, if you have a fever and coughing for 5 days, you need to stay home 3 more days with no fever for a total of 8 days.

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately. In adults, emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or difficulty awakening the person
- Bluish lips or face

### **Do I need to get tested for COVID-19?**

#### **No Symptoms:**

If you don't have any symptoms, you do NOT need to be tested for COVID-19

#### **Mild Symptoms:**

If you're at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider early, even if your illness is mild. Your healthcare provider will evaluate your health and decide whether you need to be tested.

If you're NOT at higher risk for serious illness from COVID-19, you do NOT need to be evaluated in person and do NOT need to be tested for COVID-19. Keep in mind that there is no treatment for COVID-19 and if you're mildly ill, there is no need to call your healthcare provider. You should stay home away from others.

#### **Severe Symptoms:**

If you develop emergency warning signs for COVID-19 get medical attention immediately.

Emergency warning signs include:

- Difficulty breathing or shortness of breath
- Persistent pain or pressure in the chest
- New confusion or difficulty waking up
- Bluish lips or face

## **Preventative Measures**

### **How can I reduce the risk of getting sick and prevent the spread of COVID-19?**

The best way for all Chicagoans to reduce their risk of getting sick with COVID-19 and many other respiratory illnesses is by practicing simple common sense preventative actions.

Avoid close contact with people who are sick, especially if you are at higher risk for serious illness.

Practice enhanced hygiene:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces, such as doorknobs, countertops and phones.
- Try alternatives to shaking hands, like an elbow bump or wave.
- Take special precautions when attending large gatherings where several people are within arms-length of you and practice enhanced hygiene. People at higher risk should avoid large gatherings.

- Talk to your employer about telecommuting options, telephone conferences and staggering work start and end times.
- Practice enhanced hygiene if you use public transportation. For those at higher risk, if you use public transportation and the train or bus is too full, wait for the next one. If possible, walk or bike.
- Get plenty of rest, drink plenty of fluids, eat healthy foods, and manage your stress to keep your immunity strong.
- If you have recently returned from a country, state or region with ongoing spread of COVID-19, monitor your health and follow the instructions of public health officials.

### **What if I am sick but have NOT been exposed to someone with COVID-19 and have NOT tested positive for COVID-19?**

If you have a fever with cough or difficulty breathing, you should stay home, away from others until 72 hours after the fever is gone and symptoms get better.

### **Are face masks useful?**

CDPH does not recommend that people who are not sick wear a face mask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. However, face masks **should** be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of face masks is also crucial for health workers and others who are taking care of someone who is sick.

### **When should I self quarantine?**

If you have been in **close contact** with someone who has tested positive for COVID-19 **or** if you have traveled to a location, including airport layovers, with widespread community transmission of COVID-19 ([Level 3 Travel Health Notices](#)), you should stay home for 14 days after your return date.

### **What should I do if I want to keep my child home for the rest of the school year?**

Homeschooling is suggested if students are planning to stay home for the remainder of the school year. In order to homeschool your child, they would need to be withdrawn from school, and it will be the responsibility of the parent or legal guardian to ensure their child is being instructed at home. Please note that the school will not send work home for the student and the Illinois State Board of Education does not provide recommendations for materials or provide assistance with planning a home school curriculum. However, we have prepared a list of [resources](#) that may be helpful to review if parents or guardians are unsure where to start.

We request the [homeschooling paperwork](#) be submitted to both the school and the CPS Department of Education Policy and Procedures—you can find specific details on the [website](#). The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) only requests the [Home Schooling Registration Form](#).

Per the [Chicago Board of Education policy](#), homeschooled children are entitled to enroll or re-enroll in CPS, and grade placement decisions for previously homeschooled children will be made at the discretion of school administrators. **Please note:** this enrollment/re-enrollment pertains to neighborhood schools. If a student withdraws from a non-neighborhood school, the student could lose their seat.

## **Staff**

### **Who is designated as emergency personnel?**

CPS designated school administrators, lunchroom managers, lunchroom staff, custodians, engineers, facilities staff, warehouse staff, security officers, motor truck drivers, and related contracted vendors as emergency personnel on March 16, 2020.

### **Are emergency personnel required to work in-person during Governor JB Pritzker's stay-at-home order?**

Emergency personnel already reporting to work in-person will continue to be asked to work in-person during the stay-at-home order. Per the Governor's order, all work activities must be performed while maintaining social distancing of six-feet per person to the greatest extent possible. Emergency personnel will continue to be paid an increased rate.

Emergency personnel who are ill, medically vulnerable, or caring for a dependent who is ill or medically vulnerable are not expected to report to work. Emergency staff who are unable to report to work for these reasons will continue to be paid. Emergency personnel must continue to follow call-out procedures if unable to report to work.

### **What support is available to CPS employees?**

If you are experiencing increased stress related to the COVID-19, please contact our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 1-800-424-4776 or visit [www.magellanascend.com](http://www.magellanascend.com). If you need assistance locating a primary care provider (PCP), please contact BCBSIL at <http://www.bcbsil.com/members> or 1-800-331-8032. Blue Cross Blue Shield and CVS Caremark have made some modifications to their policies to ensure members can easily access the right care and prescriptions. If you participate in these plans, please [click here](#) for more information.

## **Travel**

### **What is the current travel guidance?**

*Please note that this guidance is evolving—for the most recent recommendations, please visit the [CDC website](#). Guidance from CDPH is listed below:*

Travelers returning from any country with a [Travel Alert Level 3](#) should stay home and monitor their health for up to 14 days. Please follow instructions during this time. Your cooperation is integral to the ongoing public health response to try to slow the spread of this virus.

- Do not go to school or work. Absences for this purpose should be excused and alternate arrangements should be made for teleworking and online school assignments.
- Take your temperature with a thermometer 2 times a day and watch your health.
- If you develop a fever (100.4F/38C) or cough, seek medical care right away. Call ahead before going to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them your symptoms and that you were in an affected area. You could also call CDPH at 312-746-7425 (SICK) during business hours, after hours call 311 and request to speak to the Medical Director on call. In the case of a medical emergency, call 911.

Travelers returning from any country with a [Travel Alert Level 2](#) are also encouraged to monitor their health but do not need to limit their movement or activity. If you develop COVID-19 symptoms, contact your healthcare provider, and tell them about your symptoms and your recent travel to an area with community spread of COVID-19.

### **What if I recently traveled to an area affected by COVID-19 and got sick?**

If you were in a country with a COVID-19 outbreak and feel sick with fever, cough, or difficulty breathing, within 14 days after you left, you should:

- Seek medical advice. Call ahead before you go to a doctor's office or emergency room. Tell them about your recent travel and your symptoms.
- Avoid contact with others.
- Not travel on public transportation while sick.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds to avoid spreading the virus to others.
- Wash your hands with soap and water immediately after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.
- If soap and water are not readily available, you can use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%–95% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if your hands are visibly dirty.

**What should I do if a family member or someone I've been in close contact with traveled to a location with widespread community transmission of COVID-19?**

While the person who did travel is required to stay home for 14 days after returning, your exposure is classified as secondary exposure, and you are not required to take any additional steps at this time.

**My international trip on behalf of the district was canceled. When will I be getting a refund?**

The district is currently working with travel vendors to work out refunds for anyone who paid for international trips.

## Resources and Support

**How do I find medical care?**

If you need help locating medical care, please reach out to the CPS Office of Student Health and Wellness at [oshw@cps.edu](mailto:oshw@cps.edu) or by calling the Healthy CPS Hotline 773-553-KIDS (5437).

**What should I do if I or my child is being bullied or experiencing stigma and discrimination because of COVID-19?**

Bullying, harrassment, and discrimination are always unacceptable. COVID-19 does not distinguish between race, nationality, or geographic borders. Stigma and discrimination against people who have the virus or who have family members with the virus discourages early reporting of symptoms and further perpetuates community spread.

- If there is a concern related to student discrimination or bullying, please reach out to the Office of Student Protections (OSP) by calling 773-535-4400 or by emailing [osp@cps.edu](mailto:osp@cps.edu). You can also contact the Student Safety Center at 773-553-3335.
- If there is a concern related to staff discrimination, please reach out to the Equal Opportunity Compliance Office (EOCO) by calling 773-553-1013 or by emailing [eoco@cps.edu](mailto:eoco@cps.edu).