

PUBLICATION

Coronavirus: What K-12 Schools Should Do Now

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The outbreak of the coronavirus (COVID-19) in the United States is prompting leaders to shut down schools from Washington State to New York City after parents or students tested positive for the virus. Many schools in all parts of the country are watching information on the spread of the coronavirus closely to determine how to navigate this evolving situation. This article provides action items for schools to think through and implement now.

What should schools be doing now?

Each school and community are different, and the school's preparedness and response plan for the coronavirus will need to be tailored to fit the school's unique needs and circumstances. The safety of the students, families, and staff of your school is of the utmost importance, and advance planning is key.

- **Update (or create) the school's pandemic health plan.** If the school has a pandemic health plan already developed (for example, from the pandemic influenza), review and update that plan. Also, much of the CDC's guidance on managing the influenza pandemic, which is found [here](#), can be used by the school in crafting its plan.
- **Plan for online learning services in the event of school closure, if feasible.** How and when will online learning services be provided? What technology capabilities will be required, and has the infrastructure been tested? If the school does not provide online learning, when will the missed classes be made up? It is important to clearly communicate the school's online learning plan to parents and staff and to coordinate with the school's local and state educational authorities.
- **Analyze possible exposure to the virus.** Does the school have visitors coming to the school who have been in affected areas? Has your school recently been on break (spring break, Mardi Gras, etc.) where students or staff may have traveled internationally or to other affected areas? Does your school have upcoming student or staff trips planned to high risk areas?
- **Communicate frequently with parents, students, and staff.** Clearly convey the steps the school is taking to monitor and respond to the coronavirus. Provide information that explains why and when the school may be closed, and what online learning services will be available (if any). Consider how this information will be provided (the school's website, letter, etc.)
- **Decide to what extent the school will encourage or require students and staff to stay home when they are mildly ill.** Implement flexible attendance and sick-leave policies (if possible).
- **Review the health needs of the school's students.** Are certain students at a greater risk of infection? Consider encouraging those families to speak with their health care provider.
- **Consult with your local and state education authorities at all stages of implementing the school's response to the virus.**
- **Stay up to date on the CDC's guidance, which may be found [here](#).**

If you have questions on planning for potential impact of the coronavirus on your school, please contact [Melissa Grand](#) or any member of Baker Donelson's [Education Law Team](#). Also, please visit the [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): What You Need to Know](#) information page on our website.