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# For Questions about School Closures and Questions from Staff

## Questions About School Closures

**How are decisions made about closing schools or how long they should be closed?**

Typically, these decisions are made by school administrators, in consultation with state and local public health departments.

**How are decisions made about canceling extracurricular activities before or after school? How about cancellation of sporting or other events outside of my school district?**

These decisions are made by the affected schools in consultation with public health.

## Questions from Staff

**What do I do if I notice staff or volunteers are sick?**

School nurses, principals, and other school staff should review [OHA and ODE's Communicable Disease Guidelines](#). These guidelines will help you understand appropriate procedures for prevention and potential exclusion.

Employees should not come to work if they have had:

- Fever (100.4° F [38° C] or greater using an oral thermometer) in the past 24 hours
- Signs of a fever
- Other symptoms for at least 24 hours
- Use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants).

Employees should tell their supervisor and stay home if they are sick. CDC recommends that employees with symptoms of acute respiratory illness upon arrival to work or who become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and sent home immediately. Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette, and hand hygiene by all employees. For more information see the

- [Coughing and sneezing etiquette](#), and
- [Clean hands webpage](#) for more information.

The main symptoms of COVID-19 are cough, fever and shortness of breath. Review OHA or CDC's website for a list of symptoms that may be related to COVID-19:

- [Oregon Health Authority](#)
- [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)

### **What do I do if I notice a student is sick?**

Send the student to the school nurse. If a nurse is not available, contact the family and ask them to seek medical care and follow the above protocols for staff and volunteers.

### **What resources or templates are available to communicate to parents and students?**

ODE has sent [communications support](#) to school district officials to inform them and help them communicate to their communities. Tips for how to help children cope and other helpful information is available at these websites:

- [CDC Helping Children Cope with Disasters](#)
- [OHA Information on COVID-19](#)
- [OHA Guidance on Preventing COVID-19](#)

## **How are schools with students/staff identified with COVID-19 decontaminated?**

If students and staff at a school develop COVID-19 infection, cleaning with standard disinfectants is effective in killing the virus. A plan for cleaning the school can be developed by the school in consultation with local public health. Here is a list of [disinfectants that can be used](#) to kill the COVID-19 virus.

## **Am I at risk as a staff member?**

Viruses can be spread in schools and other places where people gather, so it's important that people with symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath) stay home; it's one of the most effective ways to minimize exposure. Public health is everyone's responsibility. Adults and children who have symptoms should stay home and contact their [local public health authority](#) or healthcare provider; if you are concerned you might have COVID-19 and plan to visit your healthcare provider, call ahead so you can arrange a plan to be seen without exposing others.

In addition, teach your child to regularly practice good hygiene measures such as [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, and [covering coughs and sneezes](#). It's important to note that the people most vulnerable to COVID-19 infection appear to be older adults and people with compromised immune systems.

## **Can I request information from providers on students identified with COVID-19?**

Your local public health department and school district will communicate critical information about an outbreak in a school setting, but student confidentiality will be maintained in accordance with federal privacy laws.

## **What information am I allowed to share if someone from my school is identified?**

Respect confidentiality. Do not share information about cases that has not already been shared by local public health authority or school.

## **If school is closed, how do we make up instructional time? Is there a waiver process?**

Oregon does have standards for instructional time ([OAR 581-022-2320](#)). However, school districts can also petition for a waiver of instructional time standards. A request for a waiver must be made in writing to the deputy superintendent of public instruction. The request must specify the reason the district is seeking the waiver and other relevant information. ODE will work closely with any school or district-wide emergency closure resulting from efforts to control an infectious disease outbreak.

School districts should consider the effects of significant absences on student achievement and establish plans that not only ensure health and safety, but also maintain continuity of learning to the degree possible.

## **How will a long closure affect credit attainment and graduation for seniors?**

Oregon has standards for diploma guidelines ([OAR 581-022-2000](#)), which include credit requirements, evidence of career-related learning, and the evidence that students can demonstrate Oregon's required Essential Skills. For credit attainment ([OAR 581-022-2025](#)), districts have options when determining how to award credit including credit by proficiency. Each school district has their own policies guiding how they award credits. For Oregon's Essential Skills ([OAR 581-022-2115](#)) students must demonstrate that they can read and comprehend a variety of text, write clearly and accurately, and apply mathematics in a variety of settings. Districts will work with students to determine the method in which a student chooses to demonstrate essential skills.

## **We have students who recently returned from a trip overseas where coronavirus was present. Should we assume OHA knows who has traveled? Should schools contact local health authorities, advise the families, etc?**

Public health agencies are currently only being notified about travelers returning from China. We are not asking schools to "report" returning

travelers to public health. The school can provide the LPHA's contact information to the family if the family wants to reach out.