COVID-19: Considerations for Schools

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Overview of Presentation

- Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)
- Plan and Prepare
- Promoting Behaviors that Prevent Spread
- Maintaining Healthy Environments and Operations
- Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick
- CDC Resources
COVID-19: Outbreak Update

- Caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2
- First U.S. case reported January 21, 2020
- As of August 3: 4,649,102 cases and 154,471 deaths
- 50 states and 7 U.S.-affiliated jurisdictions have confirmed cases

COVID-19: How It Spreads

- Thought to spread mainly from person to person:
  - Between people in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
  - Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes or talks.
  - Droplets can land in the mouths, noses, or eyes of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
  - Virus may be spread by people not showing symptoms.
COVID-19 and Children

- Impact of COVID-19 on children
  - Early reports suggest the number of COVID-19 cases among children may vary by age and other factors

- The role of children in spreading SARS-COV2
  - Evidence is emerging, yet more research is needed on SARS-CoV-2 transmission among children

- School settings and transmission
  - Schools have responded to COVID-19 using a variety of approaches and mitigation strategies
Critical Role of Schools

- Schools are an important part of the community infrastructure.

- Schools provide critical services that can help mitigate health disparities such as:
  - School meal programs
  - Social, physical, behavioral, and mental health services

- The critical role of schools makes them a priority for opening and remaining open.
Each Community is Unique

- Appropriate mitigation strategies depend on:
  - Level of community transmission
  - Characteristics of community and populations
  - Public health and healthcare capacity
- Decisions made in collaboration with state and local health officials

Guiding Principles to Keep in Mind

- Lowest Risk:
  - Virtual-only classes, activities, and events

- More Risk:
  - Small in-person classes, activities, and events
  - Groups stay together, remain at least 6 feet apart, and do not share objects

- Highest Risk:
  - Full sized in-person classes, activities, and events
  - Individuals are not spaced apart, items are shared, groups are mixed
Layering Mitigation Strategies

Use multiple strategies to more effectively reduce the spread of COVID-19.

1 Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread
Layering Mitigation Strategies

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1. Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread
2. Maintaining Healthy Environments

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1. Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread
2. Maintaining Healthy Environments
3. Maintaining Healthy Operations
4. Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick
Plan and Prepare
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- Review, update, and implement emergency operations plans
- Response plan for if/when a student, teacher, or staff tests positive.
- Involve health departments, families, community members, students and partners.
Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread
Promoting Behaviors that Reduce the Spread

- Educate about staying home when appropriate
- Teach hand hygiene and respiratory etiquette
- Teach and promote use of cloth face coverings or masks
- Ensure adequate hygiene supplies
- Post accessible signs and share messages in a variety of formats

CDC offers free communication resources such as images, videos, PSAs, and print ready signs and fact sheets at:

Use of Cloth Face Coverings or Masks in Schools

- Provides information on
  - General considerations
  - Unintended consequences
  - Practical recommendations and possible scenarios
  - Strategies to support student use by age

Cloth Face Coverings or Masks – Safety Precautions

Cloth face coverings or masks should **not** be placed on individuals who:

- Are under age 2
- Have trouble breathing
- Are unconscious
- Are incapacitated
- Are otherwise unable to remove the mask without assistance

CDC print resources available for free download on our website

Maintaining Healthy Environments
Maintaining Healthy Environments

- Clean and disinfect
- Discourage use of shared items
- Promote physical distancing
- Modify communal spaces
- Modify food service
- Ensure water and ventilation systems operate properly
Maintaining Healthy Operations
Maintaining Healthy Operations

- Protect vulnerable staff and students
- Be aware of state and local regulatory policies
- Limit gatherings, visitors and field trips
- Identify small groups and keep them together
- Stagger scheduling
- Address communication considerations
- Address staffing considerations
- Recognize signs and symptoms of COVID-19
- Support community response
- Support coping and resilience
Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick
Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

- Testing guidance
- Plan for isolation and transportation needs
- Notify health officials and close contacts
- Establish cleaning and disinfecting protocol
NEW COVID-19 CDC Resources for Schools
Resources to Support K-12 School Administrators

- Considerations for Schools: Operating Schools During COVID-19
- Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School in Fall 2020
- Guidance for K-12 School Administrators on the Use of Cloth Face Coverings in Schools
- Screening K-12 Students for Symptoms of COVID-19: Limitations and Considerations
- FAQ for School Administrators on Reopening Schools
- School Decision-Making Tool for Parents, Caregivers, and Guardians
Preparing K-12 School Administrators for a Safe Return to School Fall 2020

- This guidance can aid school administrators prepare for fall
- Provides information about:
  - what is currently known about COVID-19 among school-aged children
  - what is currently known about SARS-CoV-2 transmission in schools and impact on community transmission
  - the importance of going back to school safely
  - the ways administrators of K-12 schools can plan and prepare for in-person instruction and minimize the impact of potential closures

Key Considerations for K-12 School Administrators

Key considerations for school administrators include:

- COVID-19 transmission rates in the immediate community/communities
- Implementing multiple strategies in school to prevent spread of COVID-19 such as:
  - social distancing
  - cloth face coverings or masks
  - hand hygiene
  - use of cohorting that fit school/district and community needs
Key Considerations for K-12 School Administrators

- Use best practices to communicate, educate, and reinforce protective behaviors to prevent the spread of COVID-19
- Integrate strategies to reduce COVID-19 transmission in co-curricular and extracurricular activities
- Plan and preparing for when someone gets sick
- Work with state and local health authorities to develop a plan for contact tracing in the event of a positive case
- Communicate appropriately to families about home-based symptom screening
Readiness Assessment and Planning Tool

- General Readiness Assessment
- Daily/Weekly Readiness Assessment
- Preparing for if someone gets sick
- Special Considerations

Resources

Screening K-12 Students for Symptoms of COVID-19: Limitations and Considerations

As our knowledge and understanding of COVID-19 evolves, this guidance may change. However, based on the best available evidence at this time:

- CDC does not currently recommend universal symptom screenings (screening all students grades K-12) be conducted by schools
- Parents or caregivers should be strongly encouraged to monitor their children for signs of infectious illness every day
- Students who are sick should not attend school in-person

Back to School Decision Making for Tool Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

- Assess child and household risk of COVID-19
- Consider factors to making a choice of instructional format, if offered
- Prepare for the school year

Back to School Checklists for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

- Designed to help parents and caregivers, plan and prepare for the upcoming school year.
- Provides a check list of actions to take and points to consider according to instructional format:
  - In-Person
  - Hybrid
  - Virtual/at-home

Questions and Answers
Email: CommunityandAt-RiskTF-COVID19@cdc.gov

The findings and conclusions in this presentation are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.