WHAT IS COVID-19?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. Patients with COVID-19 have experienced mild to severe respiratory illness, including fever, cough and shortness of breath. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus. It is not the same as other types of coronaviruses that commonly circulate among people and cause mild illness, like the common cold. See attached infographic to share with parents.

HOW DOES COVID-19 SPREAD?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person, between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets when an infected person coughs or sneezes. 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. See attached infographic to share with parents.

WHY IS MY CHILD'S SCHOOL CLOSED?

The decision to temporarily dismiss K-12 schools is considered on a school-by-school basis, and in consultation and coordinator with school district officials and state and local health officials. If your school is closed, please stay home. It's out of an abundance of caution that we decided to close the schools to prevent other students from getting sick in a short amount of time. While children typically experience only mild illness from COVID-19, staying home helps prevent spread to those who are more vulnerable, which includes anyone older than 60,those with underlying health conditions, and those who are immunocompromised. Every year we see some schools close during flu season because of high rates of illness. This allows students to remain apart from the school environment and lets schools do deeper cleaning and disinfecting so the environment is healthier when students return. It's CRITICAL that people actually stay home. This is not a vacation for students. You should not be going out in public places, visiting the movies, taking trips. Stay home.

WHAT CAN PARENTS DO TO PREVENT SPREAD OF COVID-19?

Parents should take everyday preventive measures to help protect their family from the spread of COVID-19. These include:

- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Encourage respiratory etiquette** (e.g., covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or sleeve).
- **Encourage frequent, proper handwashing** with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or with hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- **Keep your child at home if sick with any illness.** If your child is sick, keep them at home. If their symptoms worsen, contact your healthcare provider. Talk with teachers about classroom assignments and activities they can do from home to keep up with schoolwork.
- **Be prepared if your child's school or childcare facility is temporarily dismissed.** Talk with your employer about sick leave and telework options in case you need to stay home with your child. Consider planning for alternate childcare arrangements.

- **Perform routine environmental cleaning.** Routinely clean and disinfect all frequently-touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, countertops, work stations) with usual cleaning and disinfection products. Follow all instructions on the product label.
- **Send ill students home** according to your school's usual policies. Keep ill students away from well students and staff until they are able to leave. Recommend that ill students seek care from a healthcare provider.
- **Monitor absenteeism in your school** and report suspected outbreaks or excessive absenteeism to the Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) and your local health department.

WHAT SHOULD A PARENT DO IF THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL OR CHILDCARE PROGRAM IS CLOSED?

- **Keep track of school closure updates.**
- **Talk to your school about options for digital and distance learning.**
- **Stay at home if school is dismissed to help slow the spread of COVID-19 in the community.**
- **Seek guidance from your school administrator to determine when students and staff should return to schools.** School closures will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific situation in your community. Be prepared for closure durations that could last several days.

WHAT SHOULD I DO IF MY CHILD IS ILL?

- If your child is ill, please keep them at home, watch for symptoms and contact your healthcare provider if symptoms become worse. Please call the healthcare provider in advance of arriving so the proper precautions can be taken.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The ISDH call center for healthcare providers and members of the public who have concerns about COVID-19 is now staffed from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m. at 317-233-7125. After-hours calls should be directed to 317-233-1325 and will be answered by an on-call epidemiologist.

Additional information and resources for COVID-19 are available at the links below.

- CDC COVID-19 guidance for schools: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html
- ISDH guidance for home care: https://www.in.gov/isdh/files/IN_COVID-19_Home_Care_2.28.20.pdf
- ISDH COVID-19 webpage: https://www.in.gov/isdh/28470.htm