



January 31, 2020

Dear Contra Costa School Districts and Principals:

Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) has received many questions from schools about how to prevent the spread of the new coronavirus that has sickened many people, including several cases in the U.S.

CCHS works closely with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) to closely monitor the virus and investigate any local, potential cases.

To date there have been three confirmed cases in California, including one in Santa Clara County.

Students and staff at schools in Contra Costa County remain at low risk of exposure to this virus. The only people who are potentially infected with this virus, which causes fever and breathing problems, are people who started getting sick WITHIN 2 weeks of returning from China, or people who have had close contact with this sick person.

To reduce the risk of spreading this virus or any other respiratory disease on school campuses:

- Students and staff who are sick should stay home until well
- Frequently wash hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water or use hand sanitizer
- Cover with an elbow or tissue when coughing or sneezing
- Avoid touching eyes, nose or mouth and limit close contact with people who are sick

We do not currently recommend using masks to prevent transmission of this virus. No asymptomatic student or staff member should be excluded from school based on their race, heritage or travel history.

We recommend that school nurses follow standard environmental infection control procedures for health care settings, ask all students reporting to the nurse's office about recent travel, and post signs encouraging students and families to follow standard hygiene practices.

Local information about the virus is available at cchealth.org/coronavirus. Schools with questions or concerns can contact the Contra Costa Public Health Communicable Disease Program at 925-313-6740.

Sincerely,

Chris Farnitano, MD
Health Officer, Contra Costa County

