south dakota
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Learning. Leadership. Service.

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COVID-19 (Coronavirus) ACTION PLAN FOR SCHOOLS
Updated: March 16, 2020, 1 p.m.

The Department of Education understands that the circumstances surrounding the current situation with COVID-19 are unique, and we will be as flexible as possible in working with schools to meet the needs of students and families.

A school's approach to managing COVID-19 should be common sense. It will involve many of the preventive steps schools already take to mitigate contagious illnesses. This document is designed to help South Dakota schools navigate the waters of a potential outbreak of coronavirus in the state. It is not intended to replace a school's existing emergency or contingency operation plans.

KEY MESSAGES

- Stay calm and informed
- Follow standard prevention measures such as staying home when sick; washing hands frequently; using hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available; covering coughs and sneezes; and cleaning frequently touched surfaces.
- Most people who have experienced COVID-19 have not become seriously ill.

ESSENTIAL CONTACTS

South Dakota Department of Education, (605) 773-3134, https://doe.sd.gov
- Mary Stadick Smith, Deputy Secretary
- Jacquie Larson, Division of Accreditation, Certification and Data Management
- Becky Nelson, Division of Learning and Instruction

South Dakota Department of Health, (605) 773-3368 or 1-800-738-2301 (in-state only)
- Linda Ahrendt, Linda.Ahrendt@state.sd.us
  South Dakota Department of Health website: https://doh.sd.gov/news/coronavirus.aspx

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
  CDC's general COVID-19 website
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html
  Resources for K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/community-mitigation-strategy.pdf
  Implementation of Mitigation Strategies for Communities
- https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/workplace-school-and-home-guidance.pdf
  Keeping School Safe

GUIDELINES FOR SCHOOLS

The following are guidelines for schools to consider as they prepare for, or face, an outbreak of COVID-19 in their communities. Schools should consult their own existing preparedness and emergency plans.

☛ **1) Preparedness Phase**

- Create or review your pandemic disease plan; it may be part of the school's existing emergency plan

- Determine staff roles and responsibilities in the event of school closure

- Coordinate efforts with local health officials and emergency preparedness officials

- Educate students and staff about the importance of common-sense hygiene:

    - Stay home when sick
    - Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
    - If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol
    - Cover coughs and sneezes appropriately – into tissue or elbow
    - Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth

- Provide time and facilities for students to wash hands as necessary throughout the school day

- Be vigilant about routinely cleaning commonly touched surfaces (eg., doorknobs, keyboards)

- Establish procedures to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive sick at school are sent home as soon as possible. Keep sick students and staff separate from well students and staff until they can be sent home.

- Plan for absenteeism

- Share prevention messages and procedures with parents

☛ **2) Minimal to Moderate Spread**

- Follow current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  NOTE: CDC guidelines are subject to change. Stay informed by visiting the CDC's COVID-19 website.

  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html
  CDC's general COVID-19 website

  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html
  Resources for K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs

https://doh.sd.gov/news/coronavirus.aspx
South Dakota Department of Health website

- Continue to coordinate efforts with local health officials and emergency preparedness officials

- Continue to educate students and staff about the importance of common-sense hygiene:

    o   Stay home when sick
    o   Wash hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
    o   If soap and water are not available, use hand sanitizer with at least 60 percent alcohol
    o   Cover coughs and sneezes appropriately – into tissue or elbow
    o   Avoid touching eyes, nose, mouth

- Continue providing time and facilities for students to wash hands as necessary throughout the school day

- Be vigilant about routinely cleaning commonly touched surfaces (eg., doorknobs, keyboards)

- Communicate regularly with parents and the public. Focus on the facts as well as prevention messages. Remember to protect the privacy of any affected students, staff and their families.

- Follow procedures for sending home students and staff who are ill. Schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19.

- If a school has cases of COVID-19, state health officials will follow up directly with the school on next steps.

☛   **3) Substantial Spread**

- Follow current guidelines from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  NOTE: CDC guidelines are subject to change. Stay informed by visiting the CDC's COVID-19 website.

  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html
  CDC's general COVID-19 website

  https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/index.html
  Resources for K-12 Schools and Childcare Programs

  https://doh.sd.gov/news/coronavirus.aspx
  South Dakota Department of Health website

- Consider if the following steps are in order:

- o Rearranging classroom seating to minimize exposure to airborne germs (eg., avoid seating students face to face when possible)
  - o Limiting extracurricular activities, field trips, etc.
  - o Rotate teachers between classrooms, rather than students

- If absenteeism interferes with everyday schooling, consider social distancing and school closure strategies.

- Ultimately, **the decision to implement social distancing, or to close a school, lies with the local school district.** When making such decisions, schools should strongly consider:

  - Current CDC guidelines
  - Numbers of students and staff who are ill
  - Input of local health care providers and the South Dakota Department of Health

- The South Dakota Departments of Education and Health are available to schools as a resource when considering the possibility of school closure.

- If school closure is to occur, consider options for making up missed time (preferable) or delivering instruction in a flex-learning format. See below "Potential school closures - Minimum hour requirements."

- If school closure is to occur, alert parents and the public in a timely manner and be sure to cancel extracurricular activities as well.

☛ **4) After a Spread**

- Continue to communicate with parents and the public regarding the situation

- Continue to monitor the situation

- If school closure did occur because of an active case of COVID-19, consider the process for reopening in conjunction with state health officials.

POTENTIAL SCHOOL CLOSURES – MINIMUM SCHOOL HOURS

In the event that a school is closed for an extended period of time due to COVID-19, school leaders must consider options for ensuring students have access to missed instruction and learning time. Ideally, this means making up lost instruction time in a face-to-face format. Other options are discussed below.

1) If a school is closed for an extended period of time, it should make every effort to adjust the school calendar to make up for missed time. This can be done in several ways; for example, extending the school year, lengthening some school days, and/or providing school on Saturdays. Changes in the school calendar would be recorded in Infinite Campus (as they already are).

2) If a school believes it can continue to meet the learning needs of students during an extended closure and wants these efforts to count towards the minimum hour requirements of SDCL 13-26-1, the school should submit documentation to the Department of Education's Office of Accreditation. A form for this submission will be shared soon.

NOTE: This is not an approval process of whether the school can deliver instruction in a flex-learning format, but rather, a notification whether the school district or system has a way to provide instruction that may be used to meet the minimum hour requirements of 13-26-1.

The documentation should include assurance that the school district or system has the ability to deliver instruction in ways other than face to face and must include the following components:

- Description of the schools and grade levels impacted
- Description of how the school(s) will provide access to teachers (eg., methods of communication, how and when availability will occur)
- Description of how the school(s) will provide access to materials (eg., electronically, non-electronically, combination of both)
- Description of how the school(s) will identify learning expectations for students (eg., learning targets, daily assignments)
- Description of how the school(s) will measure student progress in meeting learning expectations

If a school is considering e-learning platforms, the recommendation is to use systems that are already in place and consistent across the school.

3) In the instance that a school is closed for an extended period of time and is not be able to meet the minimum requirements set out in SDCL 13-26-1, the Department of Education will consider these unique circumstances as it reviews school calendars for SY 2019-20. When being considered for re-accreditation, the department will consider a waiver to instructional time as long as the district or school seeking re-accreditation made every effort to meet SDCL 13-26-1's requirements.

SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES AND OTHER FEDERAL PROGRAMS
The U.S. Department of Education has issued a Q&A relative to Providing Services to Children with Disabilities during an unexpected school closure. Visit https://doe.sd.gov/coronavirus and look under

"Resources for school officials." Document is titled "Q&A: Providing Services to Children with Disabilities."

STATE TESTING
If a school closes for an extended period, the Department of Education will work with school leaders on a case-by-case basis to determine state testing requirements. The U.S. Department of Education has issued a fact sheet on assessment and accountability. Visit https://doe.sd.gov/coronavirus and look under "Resources for school officials." Document is titled "Fact Sheet: Impact of COVID-19 on Assessments and Accountability."

ATTENDANCE
In the weeks ahead, continue tracking attendance as you normally do. Students who are staying home with parental consent would be counted according to your current local policy. For state accountability purposes, the Department of Education will work with school leaders on a case-by-case basis.

SCHOOL FOOD SERVICE
If a school closes for an extended period, school leaders might consider how to continue offering meals to students. The state Department of Education is pursuing waivers from the U.S. Department of Agriculture that would provide flexibility. If approved, the waivers would allow the state Department of Education to give local school food service programs the ability to serve free meals to affected children under modified summer feeding requirements. An application process for schools to take advantage of this flexibility will be necessary. If your school is interested in finding out more about these flexibilities, contact DOE's Office of Child and Adult Nutrition Services at (605) 773-3413.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION SERVICES TO SCHOOLS
The Department of Education has its own continuity of operations plan. Should that plan be enacted at some point due to COVID-19, the department is committed to providing the following essential functions (assuming one-day to one-month disruption):

- Communicating with schools
- Providing access to Infinite Campus (student information system)
- Maintaining distribution of commodity foods to schools/agencies across state
- Making state aid payments
- Making federal grant payments
- Making payments for school meal programs
- Processing teacher certification applications
- Maintaining data collection functions
- Continuing Braille and Talking Book's radio news program

Non-essential functions might include things like professional development opportunities, conferences, onsite visits, etc.