

PASADENA INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

HEALTH SERVICES – FAQ’S

COVID-19 (coronavirus)

Does Pasadena ISD have protocols in place in the event of a confirmed case of COVID-19 in our community?

Yes. Federal (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)*), state (*Texas Department of State Health Services*) and local health authorities (*Houston Department of Health and Human Services, City of Pasadena Health Department*) take the lead role in pandemic preparedness and response. Pasadena ISD follows the recommendations of this collaborative team and actively participates within this collaboration through surveillance and communicable disease control measures. Our nurses report communicable disease and influenza like illness to our local health authority weekly, and exclude students exhibiting symptoms as outlined in *Texas Administrative Code rule §97.7*. Pasadena ISD communicates information with staff and students through a variety of means including telephone, website, and printed materials while also directing staff and the community to reliable sources of pandemic information. Links to these sources can be found on the PISD website. It is important to note that to date, there are no cases of COVID-19 in Harris County, therefore no pandemic.

If there is an outbreak of COVID-19, will we close schools? If schools close, what will Pasadena ISD do to ensure minimal disruption to the academic process?

In Texas, local health authorities have supervisory authority and control over the administration of communicable disease control measures in the health authority’s jurisdiction. These measures include immunizations, isolation, decontamination, prevention, and quarantine. If our local health authority deems it necessary to protect the public from an outbreak of any communicable disease, they will ask us to close our schools and we will comply. As with any natural or man-made disaster, if schools are closed, academics will stop while the community recovers. Once the crisis has passed, we will focus on restorative measures to return everyone to the learning environment as quickly as possible.

What is the district doing to decrease risk of an outbreak in our schools?

Pasadena ISD is following all recommendations and guidelines from the CDC and our local health authorities. All campuses are cleaned with germicidal agents. In the event of increased absenteeism on a campus from any illness, our custodial staff incorporates further disinfecting steps to include less common areas of potential disease transmission. Common areas with increased potential for spread of communicable disease zones, such as school clinics, restrooms, water fountains, and cafeterias are disinfected daily.

How contagious is this virus?

According to preliminary research, it seems moderately infectious, similar to SARS, and is probably transmitted through sneezes, coughs, and contaminated surfaces. Scientists have estimated that each infected person could spread it to somewhere between 1.5 and 3.5 people without effective containment measures. That is about twice the contagious rate of seasonal flu, but nowhere the rate of transmission of measles. Each person diagnosed with measles will typically infect 18 more. This is why we vaccinate. Prior to the measles vaccine, an estimated 2 million people died every year from measles. Although there is no vaccine for COVID-19, researchers are actively working on one and hoping to have it on the market in 12-18 months.

How is COVID-19 transmitted?

There is still much to learn about COVID-19 as it is an emerging disease. Current evidence points to a respiratory droplet from coughing or sneezing when an infected person is in close contact (6 feet) from another person.

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Is it safe to receive a package from any area where COVID-19 has been reported?

Yes. In general, because of poor survivability of these coronaviruses on surfaces, there is likely a very low risk of spread from products or packaging shipped over a period of days or weeks at ambient temperatures.

Should I cancel my international travel because of COVID-19?

The COVID-19 outbreak has been concentrated in China, and the CDC recommends avoiding all nonessential travel to China. For travel advice for other countries, visit the Destination Page or Travel Health Notices on cdc.gov and locate the country you are planning travel to.

Should I wear a mask to protect myself from COVID-19? Or Can I send my child to school with a mask so he doesn’t get sick?

The CDC does not recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory viruses, including coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). There is currently no vaccine to prevent coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19). The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. However, as a reminder, CDC always recommends everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory diseases, including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing, or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

Are we going to implement a survey or questionnaire related to travel for newly enrolling students like we did during Ebola?

At this time, it is not recommended for individual ISD’s to question enrolling students about recent travel and exposure. The immediate risk of contracting this virus remains low in the United States. Screening measures and potential quarantine are implemented at all major U.S. travel hubs.

If staff travel to affected regions, should I ask them to remain home for 14 days to be sure they are not infected?

No. Screening measures and potential quarantine are implemented at all major U.S. travel hubs. Direct staff to the CDC Travel Health Notices for all travel warnings, precautions.