



Diane Creek, MSW  
Health Director

**TOE RIVER HEALTH DISTRICT**  
**Avery, Mitchell, & Yancey County**  
**Health Departments**

Frank Craig, MD & Julia Sherrill, MD  
Medical Directors



Jim Deaton, Chair  
Board of Health

March 6, 2020

Dear Avery County Schools Parents and Staff,

The 2019-2020 flu season is still upon us; this year has been complicated by the emergence of the novel coronavirus or COVID-19. We understand that this situation has created some questions and concerns for our students, parents, teachers, and staff. We want to assure you that the health and safety of students and staff is, as always, our top priority. We strive to ensure that Avery County Schools are safe, secure, and inviting. The guidelines below will keep students and staff healthy and ready to teach and learn.

Avery County Schools are having ongoing conversations with the Avery County Health Department as we refine our response plan to COVID-19. Meanwhile, there are community plans in place to guide prevention and preparedness efforts. These plans will help guide response efforts in our school settings should a case of COVID-19 occur in our area. Our School Nurses will continue to work with the local and state health departments, along with the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction to follow CDC guidance for appropriate response and control measures. These measures range from everyday preventive actions to preemptive, coordinated school closures and dismissals if needed.

The schools are being advised to follow the same policies and procedures for responding to any other communicable diseases, such as the seasonal flu. Also, just like a normal flu season, parents, staff, and students should take the usual precautions that are recommended for avoiding colds, flu, and other respiratory illnesses.

***This includes good respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene:***

- ***Covering coughs and sneezes;***
- ***Washing hands frequently with soap and water; and***
- ***Staying home when you feel sick or when you have a fever.***

The schools' custodial staff have increased their diligence in cleaning all shared/common surfaces in our school buildings. The schools use an EPA-registered product that disinfects for most common bacteria and viruses, including the coronavirus.

Please reach out to your school's administrators or health care provider with any specific questions or concerns. More information about COVID-19 can be found on the CDC website. You may also email your questions to the Avery County Health Department at [averyhd@toeriverhealth.org](mailto:averyhd@toeriverhealth.org).

If you have not received a flu shot this season, please do so. The Avery County Health Department is providing flu shots for FREE while supplies last.

Thank you and take care,  
Deborah Gragg, RN  
Avery County Health Department Clinic Supervisor



*Ensuring the conditions that allow the people of Avery, Mitchell and Yancey Counties to be Healthy*

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