



February 5, 2020

Dear Administrators, Teachers, Staff, and Parents:

The Sonoma Department of Health Services (DHS) is working closely with other Bay Area health departments, the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to closely monitor the 2019 novel coronavirus.

At this time, residents of the Bay Area are still at low risk of becoming infected with coronavirus, unless they have recently traveled to Wuhan or have come in close contact with someone who was ill who recently traveled in that area. So far there are 11 confirmed cases of coronavirus in the United States, of which six are in California: two people in Santa Clara County, two people in San Benito County, one person in Los Angeles County and one person in Orange County.

Beginning February 3 all flights arriving to the U.S. from China will be funneled through 11 airports where enhanced screening and triage activities will be conducted. All U.S. citizens, permanent residents and their families arriving to the US from Hubei Province, China will be screened and placed in mandatory quarantine centers for 14 days. Passengers belonging to this same group who have traveled to mainland China, but not Hubei Province, will be screened at the airport. If they have no symptoms of illness, they will be directed to return to their homes and work with their local health departments for support in home-monitoring for 14 days. Students and school staff will be asked to stay home for 14 days and conduct home-monitoring. All US airlines with flights to China have voluntarily suspended services.

When new viruses surface, there can be lots of anxiety and stress. It's important to stay informed. We acknowledge the impact that this outbreak is having on our community, and on those who have friends or relatives who are affected. We are thinking of you.

### **What you need to know**

- Any child or staff member who recently traveled from China should stay home from school and school activities for 14 days after they left China.

Please note that the risk of exposure to this new coronavirus in China is increasing over time. The recommendation to exclude students from school is effective Monday, February 3, 2020. Persons who have arrived from China prior to February 3, 2020 are at lower risk and do not need to be excluded.

In the unusual event that a child or staff member is identified who

- recently traveled from mainland China, AND
- has symptoms of respiratory illness, such as fever and cough,

that person should be provided a surgical mask to wear, sent home, and the school should

immediately contact the Sonoma County Disease Control Unit at (707) 565-4567.

**At this time, there is low risk to residents of California from novel coronavirus, but schools can take common-sense precautions to prevent the spread of all infectious diseases.** These precautions will be also helpful to prevent the spread of other common illness such as influenza and gastroenteritis.

- Encourage students and staff to stay home when they are sick.
  - Those who have a fever at school should go home and stay home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine.
  - Separate sick students and staff from others, ideally in a separate place, until they can be picked up to go home.
- Promote hand hygiene among students and staff through education, scheduled time for handwashing, and availability of soap and water or hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your face, particularly your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Teach and encourage proper cough etiquette—cough or sneeze into a tissue, sleeve, or arm (do not use hands).
- Perform routine surface cleaning.
- Consider not attending large gatherings, as this is where cold, flu, and other respiratory viruses often spread
- Get your annual flu shot, which is the best way to protect you from flu; influenza still kills thousands of people in the US every year.

Finally, the response to coronavirus is evolving quickly, and we are learning more daily. DHS has a webpage dedicated to novel coronavirus at [sonomacounty.ca.gov/Novel-Coronavirus-Identified/](https://sonomacounty.ca.gov/Novel-Coronavirus-Identified/); we will keep the webpage updated as we know more. We will monitor the developing situation and inform you of any additional public health recommendations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C. Philip', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Celeste Philip, MD, MPH  
Health Officer, County of Sonoma