



February 28, 2020

Montana District Superintendents:

We are writing in response to public interest in the coronavirus (COVID-19) and to provide you with information to keep your school and community informed and safe. We are monitoring the situation closely with our local, state and federal partners. **There are currently no positive cases of COVID-19 in Montana.** However, as with any infectious disease, schools and communities should practice preventative measures and be prepared to respond to infectious diseases should they impact your community.

The new school health and safety [rules](#) from the Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) require schools to have communicable or infectious illness procedures requiring someone with a possible infectious disease to be isolated and potentially evaluated in coordination with the local health department. This protocol will help you not only respond to distant threats such as COVID-19 but also to more immediate threats in Montana such as norovirus or flu outbreaks

First and foremost, the OPI, DPHHS, and CDC encourage schools to practice basic preventative measures including keeping sick students and faculty home, regularly washing hands and having hand sanitation stations available, as well as avoiding transmission through sanitary practices. Your school may consider a review of current methods for cleaning and sanitizing high-risk areas during respiratory season if this is not already a current practice.

At this time, given the absence of COVID-19 cases in the state and region:

- 1) No activities or plans should be canceled or postponed.
- 2) Steps to prevent the spread of any infectious illness, including influenza, should be emphasized.
- 3) Consultation with local public health officials prior to issuing health messages or modifying activities is strongly encouraged.

Your local county health department is your best resource for getting updates on infectious diseases and how to handle them should they impact your community. DPHHS and the CDC provide regular updates to local health departments. Additionally, DPHHS has created a COVID-19 specific [webpage](#) with information and resources. The CDC also maintains a [webpage](#) with COVID-19 information.

In the event of a COVID-19 impact to Montana, more information will be communicated to you by state and federal officials. Any suspected cases of COVID-19 should be reported to your local health department. If you are unable to reach your local health department you may call DPHHS at 406-444-0273. This number is answered 24/7. In the event of an outbreak in your community, your local health department along with the assistance of state and federal officials will be leading response and coordination efforts.

The OPI has resources available to assist in creating or updating an Emergency Operations Plan. Please contact Tracy Moseman at tmoseman@mt.gov to learn about free on-site technical assistance opportunities, or visit [Emergency Planning and Safety](#) for planning guides and resources.

Thank you for your vigilance in keeping your students, staff, and community protected from infectious diseases.

Sincerely,

Tracy Moseman
Division Administrator
School Health & Safety
Montana Office of Public Instruction

Dr. Greg Holzman
Chief Medical Officer
State of Montana