

Dear Superintendent:

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and Utah's 13 local health departments are actively monitoring the ongoing outbreak of novel (new) coronavirus, or COVID-19. We are coordinating closely with healthcare providers, the Governor's Coronavirus Task Force, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

To help school administrators prepare for COVID-19, the Utah County Health Department and the UDOH have prepared educational resources and guidance for schools.

The COVID-19 situation is rapidly changing, and the Utah County Health Department will continue to provide you with the most up-to-date information as quickly as possible. For the most current information, visit coronavirus.utah.gov.

What we know about COVID-19

- COVID-19 is a new strain of coronavirus, so people most likely have no immunity to it. It causes a respiratory illness ranging from mild flu-like symptoms to severe pneumonia. The symptoms of COVID-19 are similar to what someone may get from a seasonal illness, such as the flu, this time of year (fever, cough, or shortness of breath).
- These symptoms on their own are not cause for alarm.
- Most people with COVID-19 will have mild to moderate symptoms.
- The groups most likely to suffer severe complications are people older than age 60 years of age and those with medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- Children and adolescents appear to be less likely to experience severe illness.
- There is currently no vaccine or antiviral treatment for COVID-19.

How the virus spreads

- COVID-19 appears to spread the same way the common cold or flu spreads, through droplets in the air when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People most at risk for getting COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has it.
- It is likely people are most contagious when they are experiencing symptoms.
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms, but this is not likely the main way the virus spreads.

What schools can do to prevent the spread of COVID-19

- Encourage students and staff who are sick to stay home.
- Review policies and ensure staff feel comfortable to stay home if they are sick.
- Reduce the use of incentives, or rewards, for perfect attendance.
- Proper handwashing is the most important way to stop the spread of illness. Increase education of proper hand washing and good hygiene education for students, families, and staff (resources included).
 - Teach students to wash their hands often, especially before eating, after going to the bathroom, and after recess.
 - Encourage students not to touch their mouth or eyes with their hands.

 - Teach students to cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or an elbow.
 - Encourage students not to share food, or drink from the same cup or bottle, as someone else.
- Normal cleaning and disinfecting procedures for schools should be effective at stopping the spread of illness.
 - Clean surfaces that are touched often (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, toilet handles, sink handles, countertops) with EPA-recommended products.
 - Make sure enough soap, paper towels, tissues, and hand sanitizer are available.
 - For surfaces used often (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls), students and teachers can also use disposable wipes to clean surfaces before each use. If disposable wipes are used, it is important to remind students and staff to throw them away right after they use them.

What if a student is exposed?

- If a student is showing symptoms AND reports exposure to someone who tested positive for COVID-19, or has recently traveled to an area with ongoing community spread of COVID-19, place the student in a room with the door closed. Have a parent or guardian contact their healthcare provider before going to a clinic. Notify the local health department.

School Closures

Local health departments have the authority to close schools when necessary to protect the public's health. In the event, that a school closure is necessary, the Utah County Health Department will work closely with the school district, school, and Utah Department of Health along with their State Education partners to make the determination that best addresses the specific circumstances.

Decisions about school closures will be made carefully, and with consideration of unintended consequences. Currently, children are not at high risk for getting severe illness. Not having children in school may increase community exposure, as those children may visit entertainment and other community venues.

We appreciate the important role educators and administrators play in public health and preventing the spread of illness. If you have any questions or are experiencing increases in illness and would like to consult with our team, please call us at 801-851-7000.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Ralph L. Clegg". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'R'.

Ralph L. Clegg, EHS, MPA
Executive Director / Local Health Officer