

MEMORANDUM

TO: Florida College Presidents
FROM: Kathy Hebda
DATE: March 11, 2020
SUBJECT: COVID-19 (Coronavirus) Updates

Contact Information:

Florida Department of Health
1-(866-779)-6121 **24/7 Hotline**
COVID-19@flhealth.gov

Monday, Governor Ron DeSantis issued [Executive Order 20-52](#), declaring a State of Emergency in Florida for COVID-19. By declaring a State of Emergency, Governor DeSantis is ensuring that the state and local governments have the resources and flexibility they need to prepare and respond. **Florida's student population is at a low risk, but Florida is in a constant state of preparation to respond to COVID-19 and FDOE is available to assist as needed. Daily updates will be posted on the [FDOH website](#) and the [FDOE website](#), and we will continue to provide regular updates.**

As of yesterday, there were 21 total cases of COVID-19 in Florida and two deaths have occurred. [The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has ruled Florida's student population is at low-risk.](#) However, as COVID-19 evolves, now is the time for all Floridians to prepare, and the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) understands that concerns about health and safety are paramount for all education communities.

Based on our most recent communications, you will find helpful recommendations, guidelines and communications resources to keep your students and staff at low-risk and up-to-date, below:

College-related Travel Recommendations

FDOE is recommending that state colleges and K-12 school districts temporarily postpone all out-of-state, by plane travel. While this is just a recommendation and we understand the complications this can create in the near term, we believe this recommendation is in the best interests of the health of all students, faculty and staff. The [local county health departments](#) and our team at the Florida Department of Education would be happy to discuss strategies with you around implementing similar best practices in order to reduce the risks to your students.

General Travel Recommendations

With educators, students, and families returning from spring break soon, FDOE recommends state colleges and K-12 school districts strictly follow [CDC International Travel Advisory Guidelines](#), per the Florida Department of Health (FDOH), which is advising all individuals who have traveled internationally to follow the [new CDC guidelines](#), summarized below:

- [If you have traveled to China, Iran, Italy or South Korea \(Warning Level 3\):](#) CDC recommends 14-day self-isolation and social distancing upon return to the United States. Social distancing includes avoiding going out in public and close personal interactions.

- A person that experiences a fever and symptoms of respiratory illness, cough or shortness of breath, within 14 days after travel from China, Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan and any other destination under a [CDC travel advisory](#) should call ahead to their health care provider and local county health department (CHD) and mention their recent travel or close contact.
- [If you have traveled to Japan \(Alert Level 2\)](#): CDC recommends that travelers should monitor their health and limit interactions with others for 14 days after returning to the United States. If you become symptomatic, immediately self-isolate and contact your county health department before visiting your health care provider.
 - If a person has had close contact with an individual who has recently traveled to these destinations and has shown symptoms, they should also call their county health department and health care provider. The health care provider will work with the Department of Health to determine if that person should be tested for COVID-19.
- [Cruises](#): CDC recommends travelers defer all cruise ship travel worldwide.
 - Based on the CDC guidance, FDOE recommends that if you are returning from a cruise, and are symptomatic to self-isolate and contact your [doctor and local health department](#).
- **Regarding work-related travel**, consider using the same recommendations for both employees and student-groups. Look ahead to upcoming travel for the next three months and put together criteria to make consistent determinations about travel, especially considering that information and requirements/recommendations from CDC and FDOH can change.
- For more information regarding current CDC travel advisories related to COVID-19, [click here](#).

Informed Communications on COVID-19

In coordination with the FDOH and the Florida Department of Emergency Management (FDEM), FDOE recommends the following sources and best practices to assist with community mitigation and preparedness.

- Schools, school districts, colleges and universities are encouraged to [contact their local health department for the most up-to-date information and assistance](#), regarding COVID-19. County health departments are fully integrated with the FDOH and the CDC and are well equipped to respond if necessary.
- Please visit FDOH's dedicated [COVID-19 webpage](#) or FDOE's [webpage](#) for information and guidance regarding COVID-19 in Florida.
- For any other questions related to COVID-19 in Florida, please contact the FDOH's dedicated COVID-19 Call Center by calling **1-(866) 779-6121**. **The Call Center is available 24 hours a day**. Inquiries may also be emailed to COVID-19@flhealth.gov.
- Helpful information can also be found at the following websites:
 - FDOH: <http://www.floridahealth.gov/>
 - CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/>
 - FDOE: <http://fldoe.org/em-response/>
 - Please see this [helpful flier](#) from the CDC related to handwashing and hand sanitizer.
 - Please see this [helpful flier](#) from the CDC related to stopping the spread of germs.
 - CDC has published [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools to Plan, Prepare, and Respond to COVID-19](#).
 - CDC has also published [Interim Guidance for Business and Employers](#), we strongly suggest school districts and school administration to review this guidance.

About COVID-19

- COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth, including when an individual coughs or sneezes. These droplets may land on objects and surfaces. Other people may contract COVID-19 by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- Symptoms of COVID-19 are fever, cough and shortness of breath. Symptoms may appear in as few as two days or as many as 14 days following exposure. Most people recover from COVID-19 without needing special treatment. The elderly and those with underlying medical problems like high blood pressure, heart problems and diabetes, are more likely to develop serious illness.
- [Recent reports](#) have stated that on average, symptoms of COVID-19 develop in 5 days.
- [CDC said most confirmed cases of COVID-19 reported from China have occurred in adults](#), and infection among children was relatively uncommon.
- The CDC does not recommend that asymptomatic, healthy people wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19. Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others. The use of facemasks is also crucial for [health workers](#) and [people who are taking care of someone in close settings](#) (at home or in a health care facility).

We appreciate your tremendous commitment to Florida's students. We are including with this memorandum an updated Question and Answer guide that you and your entire educational community can utilize to become more informed on COVID-19 preparation and response.

Lastly, if you are contemplating a campus closure, we respectfully request that you contact us as soon as possible, so that we may work with you to ensure that our students' interests are always front and center.

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