



**Department of
Education**

Chancellor Richard A. Carranza

March 10, 2020

Dear Families,

The health and safety of all NYC Department of Education (DOE) students continues to be our first priority in the wake of the evolving situation around the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) in New York City. We are writing today with a number of important updates for all students and families, including the latest information about ways to protect your health.

There are a number of actions we have taken and many things you can do to keep our communities safe. The most important action you can take is to **stay home if you are sick**. Please see the attached [What You Need to Know](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/novel-coronavirus-wuhan-factsheet.pdf) factsheet [<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/novel-coronavirus-wuhan-factsheet.pdf>] and [Stop the Spread](https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/stop-the-spread-poster.pdf) flyer [<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/stop-the-spread-poster.pdf>], and read on for additional information.

Our Preparations and Protocols

School Cleaning + Hygiene

We continue to work in close partnership with the New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DOHMH) to enhance protocols in schools. These include:

- Ensuring that all DOE school buildings have a nurse;
- Increasing deep cleanings to two times per week, disinfecting surface areas with Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-approved cleaning disinfectant;
- Ensuring that all schools have adequate hygiene and cleaning materials so that bathrooms are continuously stocked with soap and paper towels;
- Supplying all schools with facemasks to be used if a student or staff member exhibits symptoms and requires isolation prior to transport to a doctor and/or testing; and
- Strongly encouraging regular hand washing throughout the day, particularly before meals, and making changes as needed to ensure students have the time to wash hands.

International Travel

- All DOE-sponsored international travel for students and staff for the remainder of the 2019–2020 school year is canceled.
- This includes study abroad programs, where students are scheduled to come from other countries to stay with host families in NYC, and where DOE public school students are hosted abroad.

Attendance

We are committed to easing families' concerns on attendance and admissions.



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- Student absences in the current school year (2019–2020) will not impact applications of current fifth- and eighth-graders applying to middle- or high-schools for the 2020–2021 school year.
- Student absences in the current school year (2019–2020) will not impact applications of current fourth- and seventh-graders applying for middle- or high-school for the 2021–2022 school year.

What if a student feels sick in school?

- In the event a student is sick, complaining of fever, cough, or shortness of breath, that child should be taken to the school nurse.
- The nurse will ask the student to wear a face mask, call for parental pick up, and recommend calling a medical provider for instructions.
- Any student with respiratory symptoms and fever should wait in a supervised setting with a closed door, away from other students.

What if there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in my school?

- In the event that DOHMH determines that there is a need for investigation, closure, or other action at a school, you will immediately be notified.
- Per New York State, if there is a confirmed case in a school, the school must be closed for at least 24 hours while DOHMH investigates and determines whether additional closure is needed.
- We urge you to ignore rumors you might hear separate and apart from official communication from DOHMH, DOE, and your school.

We are working with the State to provide more information on school closure guidance to share in the near future.

Large Gatherings

Right now, the City has not advised the cancellation of large events or public gatherings, but is monitoring developments and will adjust as needed.

- If you are sick, stay home.
- If you have chronic conditions like heart disease, diabetes, a compromised immune system, chronic lung disease, and/or cancer, avoid unnecessary gatherings and events.

What You Can Do

Reduce Overcrowding

- Walk or bike to work, if possible.
- If the train is too packed, wait for the next one.



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If You Feel Sick

- Stay home and call your doctor if you have symptoms including but not limited to coughing, shortness of breath, fever, or sore throat.
- If you do not feel better in 24–48 hours, seek care from your doctor.
- Avoid going out in public. Do not go to school or work until you have been fever-free at least 72 hours without the use of fever-reducing drugs like Tylenol or ibuprofen.
- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.

Special Guidance for Vulnerable New Yorkers

- The City is advising those with chronic lung disease, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or a compromised immune system to avoid unnecessary events and gatherings.
- If you have family or friends who have one of these conditions, do not visit them if you feel sick.

If You Have Traveled Recently

Anyone who has traveled to Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan, or China and returned on or after March 4, 2020, must stay home from work or school for 14 days after their last day in that country and minimize contact with other people.

- If returning travelers from affected countries develop fever, cough, or trouble breathing, they should call their medical provider and tell them about their symptoms and history of travel.
- For those self-monitoring at home, DOHMH has developed a supporting doctor's note and FAQ available at nyc.gov/coronavirus under "Returning Travelers."

Students and families who returned from the affected countries before March 4, 2020, should monitor their health; if they develop any symptoms, they should stay home and call their medical provider. Please monitor CDC.gov for updates on affected countries here: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/after-travel-precautions.html>.

Continue to Practice General Viral Infection Prevention Measures Including:

- Wash your hands with soap and water often.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue or sleeve when sneezing or coughing.
- Do not touch your face with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.



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How to Stay Informed and Fight Bias

To get regular updates on the latest developments regarding coronavirus in New York City, text COVID to 692-692. You will receive regular SMS texts with the latest news and developments.

- Please read the What You Need to Know factsheet [<https://www1.nyc.gov/assets/doh/downloads/pdf/imm/novel-coronavirus-wuhan-factsheet.pdf>] attached to this letter for more information.
- Visit nyc.gov/coronavirus at any time for important updates, including ways to fight stigma and bias around this issue.

It's important we come together as a city and support one another as neighbors and New Yorkers during this time. COVID-19 is not more likely found in any one race or nationality, and we must each model inclusion and actively work to combat bias in our workplaces and communities.

The health and safety of our students continues to be our chief priority, and we will continue to follow all guidance and take all appropriate measures accordingly, and stay in consistent communication with our 1.1 million families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Richard A. Carranza'.

Richard A. Carranza
Chancellor
New York City Department of Education



Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19): What You Need to Know

What is Coronavirus?

- Coronaviruses are a family of viruses that cause mild illnesses like a cold, to more serious illnesses like pneumonia.
- A novel (new) coronavirus is a type of coronavirus that has not previously been seen in humans.
- 2019 novel coronavirus is a new type of coronavirus identified as the cause of an outbreak of respiratory illness (which affects breathing) called COVID-19.
- COVID-19 infections have now been reported in many countries including the United States. For an updated list of affected areas, visit [cdc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus).

What are the Symptoms of Coronavirus?

- Commonly reported symptoms include fever, cough or shortness of breath.
- Most people with COVID-19 will have mild symptoms. People who are at most risk for severe illness are those who have other health conditions, including chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system.

How Does Coronavirus Spread?

- The virus is likely to be spread from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes.

Who is Most at Risk for Coronavirus?

- People who are at most risk for severe illness are elderly or have other health conditions such as chronic lung disease, heart disease, diabetes or a weakened immune system.

How Can I Protect Myself and Others from Coronavirus?

- Wash hands often with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not available.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve when sneezing or coughing. Do not use your hands.
- Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Do not shake hands. Instead wave or elbow bump.
- Monitor your health more closely than usual for cold or flu symptoms.
- Get the flu shot. Although the flu shot will not protect you from COVID-19, it will help prevent the flu which has similar symptoms to this coronavirus.

What Should I do if I Feel Sick?

- Stay home and call your doctor if you have cold or flu symptoms like coughing, shortness of breath, fever or sore throat.
- If you do not feel better in 24-48 hours, seek care from your doctor.
- Avoid going out in public. Do not go to school or to work until you have been fever-free for at least 72 hours without the use of fever reducing drugs like Tylenol or ibuprofen.



Health

- If you need help getting medical care, call 311.
- NYC will provide care regardless of immigration status or ability to pay.
- Hospital staff will not ask about immigration status. Receiving health care is not a public benefit identified by the public charge test.

Is it Safe to Attend Large Gatherings?

- If you are sick, stay home.
- If you have chronic lung disease, heart disease, cancer, diabetes, or a weakened immune system, avoid unnecessary events and gatherings.
- If you have no symptoms, it is okay to go to events, but practice good hygiene and remain vigilant about your health.
- Right now, no large events or public gatherings are cancelled but we are monitoring developments and will adjust as needed.

What Else Can I Do?

- Help reduce overcrowding.
- Consider telecommuting where possible. Private-sector employers should consider allowing employees to telecommute if the job allows.
- The City is also asking private-sector employers to consider staggered work hours. For example, instead of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., consider changing some work hours to 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. or 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.
- Walk or bike to work, if you can.
- When taking the subway, if the train is too packed, be patient and wait for the next one.
- If you have family or friends who have a chronic health condition, do not visit them if you feel sick.

What Should I Do about Harassment or Discrimination Related to Coronavirus?

- It is important to separate facts from fear and guard against stigma. A lot of information circulating about coronavirus on social media and in some news reporting is not based in the facts.
- Support your friends, neighbors and colleagues by sharing this fact sheet to counter misinformation. Obtain information from trusted sources like the NYC Health Department.
- If you are being harassed due to your race, nation of origin or other identities, call 311 to report discrimination or harassment to the NYC Commission on Human Rights.
- If you are experiencing stress or feeling anxious, contact NYC Well at 888-NYC-WELL (888-692-9355) or text "WELL" to 65173. NYC Well is a confidential help line that is staffed 24/7 by trained counselors who can provide brief supportive therapy, crisis counseling, and connections to behavioral health treatment, in more than 200 languages.

Where Can I Get More Information?

- For real-time updates, text COVID to 692-692. Messages and data rates may apply. Check your wireless provider plan for details.
- Visit [nyc.gov/coronavirus](https://www.nyc.gov/coronavirus) for additional resources and information.