



NORTH CAROLINA ASSOCIATION FOR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

Guidance for Schools with Identified Cases of COVID-19 in Their Community

If local health officials report that there are cases of COVID-19 in the community, schools may need to take additional steps in **response** to prevent spread in the school. The first step for schools in this situation is to talk with local health officials. The guidance provided here is based on current knowledge of COVID-19. As additional information becomes available about the virus, how it spreads, and how severe it is, this guidance may be updated. Administrators are encouraged to work closely with local health officials to determine a course of action for their childcare programs or schools.

Determine if, when, and for how long your school may need to be dismissed.

Temporarily dismissing K-12 schools is a strategy to stop or slow the further spread of COVID-19 in communities. During school dismissals, schools may stay open for staff members (unless ill) while students stay home. Keeping facilities open a) allows teachers to develop and deliver lessons and materials remotely, thus maintaining continuity of teaching and learning; and b) allows other staff members to continue to provide services and help with additional response efforts.

School administrators should work in close collaboration and coordination with local health officials to make dismissal and large event cancellation decisions. Schools are not expected to make decisions about dismissal or canceling events on their own. Schools can seek specific guidance from local health officials to determine if, when, and for how long to take these steps. Large event cancellations or school dismissals*** may be recommended for 14 days, or possibly longer if advised by local health officials. The nature of these actions (e.g., geographic scope, duration) may change as the local outbreak situation evolves.

If an ill student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case:

- **Local health officials may recommend temporary school dismissals if a student or staff member attended school prior to being confirmed as a COVID-19 case.** Local health officials' recommendations for the scope (e.g., a single school, a

full district) and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the most up-to-date information about COVID-19 and the specific cases in the impacted community.

- **Schools should work with the local health department and other relevant leadership to communicate the possible COVID-19 exposure.** This communication to the school community should align with the communication plan in the school's emergency operations plan. In such a circumstance, it is critical to maintain confidentiality of the student or staff member as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act.
- **If a student or staff member has been identified with COVID-19, school and program administrators should seek guidance from local health officials to determine when students and staff should return to schools and what additional steps are needed for the school community.** In addition, students and staff who are well but are taking care of or share a home with someone with a case of COVID-19 should follow instructions from local health officials to determine when to return to school.

If schools are dismissed, schools can consider the following steps:

- **Temporarily cancel extracurricular group activities and large events.**
 - Cancel or postpone events such as after-school assemblies and pep rallies, field trips, and sporting events.
- **Discourage students and staff from gathering or socializing anywhere.**
 - Discourage gatherings at places like a friend's house, a favorite restaurant, or the local shopping mall.
- **Ensure continuity of education.**
 - Review continuity plans, including plans for the continuity of teaching and learning. Implement e-learning plans, including digital and distance learning options as feasible and appropriate.
 - Determine, in consultation with school district officials or other relevant state or local partners:
 - If a waiver is needed for state requirements of a minimum number of in-person instructional hours or school days (seat time) as a condition for funding;
 - How to convert face-to-face lessons into online lessons and how to train teachers to do so;
 - How to triage technical issues if faced with limited IT support and staff;
 - How to encourage appropriate adult supervision while children are using distance learning approaches; and
 - How to deal with the potential lack of students' access to computers and the Internet at home.
 - **Ensure continuity of meal programs.**
 - Consider ways to distribute food to students.

- If there is community spread of COVID-19, design strategies to avoid distribution in settings where people might gather in a group or crowd. Consider options such as “grab-and-go” bagged lunches or meal delivery.
- **Consider alternatives for providing essential medical and social services for students.**
 - Continue providing necessary services for children with special healthcare needs, or work with the state *Title V Children and Youth with Special Health Care Needs (CYSHCN) Program*.