

## Holmes County Consolidated School District Family:

District officials are closely monitoring the recent COVID-19 outbreak affecting our country. The information below is from the Mississippi Department of Health. Ro the remainder of Spring Break, continue to remain vigilant and aware of updates regarding the spread of the virus. District administrators are preparing documentation to send home with students upon our return regarding steps we will take to limit the spread of the virus in our schools. Please refer to the information concerning the coronavirus found in the latest Leadership Weekly Communication (Volume 2\_3.5).

Please review the latest guidance below from Dr. Thomas Dobbs, State Health Officer at the Mississippi Department of Health.

**As you are aware, the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) has continued the spread worldwide and is now being found in several parts of the U.S. Employers throughout MS, including state government offices, need to prepare for the possibility that this virus may be in our communities soon.**

### COVID-19 Basics:

- **The Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) causes a febrile respiratory syndrome, similar to influenza.**
- **Many cases may have mild symptoms.**
- **Severe cases may occur, leading to respiratory failure and death, especially among older adults and those with chronic medical conditions.**
- **The vast majority of people infected with COVID-19 will fully recover.**
- **The virus is spread from person-to-person through respiratory droplets.**
- **There is no antiviral treatment or vaccine currently available for COVID-19.**

Please review the essential elements of CDC guidance for preventing the spread of illness in the workplace. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-business-respon.html> (See below).

Please note – additional and more specific guidance will be provided in the near future.

**A call center at the Mississippi State Department of Health is now available for the general public at: [1 877 978-6453](tel:18779786453) to answer questions about COVID-19.**

## **CDC Recommended Strategies for Employers to Use Now:**

### **Actively encourage sick employees to stay home:**

- Employees who have symptoms of acute respiratory illness are recommended to stay home and not come to work until they are free of fever (100.4° F [37.8° C] or greater using an oral thermometer), signs of a fever, and any other symptoms for at least 24 hours, without the use of fever-reducing or other symptom-altering medicines (e.g. cough suppressants). Employees should notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure that your sick leave policies are flexible and consistent with public health guidance and that employees are aware of these policies.
- Talk with companies that provide your business with contract or temporary employees about the importance of sick employees staying home and encourage them to develop non-punitive leave policies.
- Do not require a healthcare provider's note for employees who are sick with acute respiratory illness to validate their illness or to return to work, as healthcare provider offices and medical facilities may be extremely busy and not able to provide such documentation in a timely way.
- Employers should maintain flexible policies that permit employees to stay home to care for a sick family member. Employers should be aware that more employees may need to stay at home to care for sick children or other sick family members than is usual.

### **Separate sick employees:**

CDC recommends that employees who appear to have acute respiratory illness symptoms (i.e. cough, shortness of breath) upon arrival to work or become sick during the day should be separated from other employees and be sent home immediately. Sick employees should cover their noses and mouths with a tissue when coughing or sneezing (or an elbow or shoulder if no tissue is available).

### **Emphasize staying home when sick, respiratory etiquette and hand hygiene by all employees:**

Place posters that encourage [staying home when sick](#), [cough and sneeze etiquette](#), and [hand hygiene](#) at

the entrance to your workplace and in other workplace areas where they are likely to be seen.

- Provide tissues and no-touch disposal receptacles for use by employees.
- Instruct employees to clean their hands often with an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60-95% alcohol, or wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Soap and water should be used preferentially if hands are visibly dirty.
- Provide soap and water and alcohol-based hand rubs in the workplace. Ensure that adequate supplies are maintained. Place hand rubs in multiple locations or in conference rooms to encourage hand hygiene.

Visit the [coughing and sneezing etiquette](#) and [clean hands webpage](#) for more information.

### **Perform routine environmental cleaning:**

- Routinely clean all frequently touched surfaces in the workplace, such as workstations, countertops, and doorknobs. Use the cleaning agents that are usually used in these areas and follow the directions on the label.
- No additional disinfection beyond routine cleaning is recommended at this time.
- Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (for example, doorknobs, keyboards, remote controls, desks) can be wiped down by employees before each use.

### **Advise employees before traveling to take certain steps:**

- Check the [CDC's Traveler's Health Notices](#) for the latest guidance and recommendations for each country to which you will travel. Specific travel information for travelers going to and returning from China, and information for aircrew, can be found at on the [CDC website](#).
- Advise employees to check themselves for symptoms of [acute respiratory illness](#) before starting travel and notify their supervisor and stay home if they are sick.
- Ensure employees who become sick while traveling or on temporary assignment understand that they should notify their supervisor and should promptly call a healthcare provider for advice if needed.
- If outside the United States, sick employees should follow your company's policy for obtaining medical care or contact a healthcare provider or overseas

medical assistance company to assist them with finding an appropriate healthcare provider in that country. A U.S. consular officer can help locate healthcare services. However, U.S. embassies, consulates, and military facilities do not have the legal authority, capability, and resources to evacuate or give medicines, vaccines, or medical care to private U.S. citizens overseas.

Thank you.

Thomas Dobbs, MD, MPH  
State Health Officer



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