

HOWARD A. ZUCKER, MD, JD, COMMISSIONER

SHANNON L. TAHOE, COMMISSIONER

February 5, 2020

Dear School Administrators:

Recently, a new coronavirus called 2019 Novel (new) Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was detected in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China that has not been previously found in humans. This coronavirus can lead to fever, cough and shortness of breath. There are thousands of confirmed cases in China, including cases outside of Wuhan. Additional cases are being identified in a growing number of countries, including the United States.

This letter is to provide guidance to schools in light of this new virus as well as federal guidance recently issued from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Schools should share this information with their school nurses and directors of school health services (aka medical directors).

**At this time, there are no cases in New York State. The risk to residents and students is low.** At this time of the year, there are many possible causes for respiratory illness. Therefore, there is no need to cancel school or social events, and there is no need for students or school staff to wear surgical masks at school.

As a reminder, all student health information is confidential and may only be shared in accordance with FERPA. Students should not be excluded from school or any school activities based on race, country of origin, or recent travel, including to any part of China.

**Q. Are visitors from China being screened?**

A. Yes. On January 31, 2020, Health and Human Services Secretary Alex M. Azar II declared a public health emergency (PHE) for the United States. Also, on January 31, the President of the United States (US) signed a presidential “Proclamation on Suspension of Entry as Immigrants and Nonimmigrants of Persons who Pose a Risk of Transmitting 2019 Novel Coronavirus.” As part of this action, new screening protocols are effective for individuals entering the US from China at designated airports.

**Q. Can people who visited China and returned on or after February 2, 2020 return to school and/or work?**

A. Yes, people who visited China and returned after February 2, 2020 can return to school or work, unless a local health department informs the school that a student or staff must comply with a quarantine order.

As directed by the Presidential Proclamation, students and staff who have returned to the US on or after February 2, 2020, may be subject to quarantine by a local health department that prevents them from attending school and/or work. Such movement restrictions will be in effect for a total of 14 days after leaving China. Notice of these passengers is being sent to local health departments, which are responsible for the monitoring and movement restrictions necessary to prevent spread of this virus. The local health department will be required to contact schools about restrictions on students and furthermore, local health departments will notify schools when students can return to school.

Absent a school receiving such direction from the local health department, students should not be excluded from school or any school activities based on recent travel.

If a person who visited China and returned after February 2, 2020 and who is not subject to quarantine, develops fever and respiratory symptoms (cough or difficulty breathing), the school should advise the individual or their parent or guardian to immediately call the local health department. The local health department can assist them with determining what additional evaluation is needed and where it should take place.

Pursuant to Education Law § 906(1),

[w]henver,... a student in the public schools shows symptoms of any communicable or infectious disease reportable under the public health law that imposes a significant risk of infection of others in the school, he or she shall be excluded from the school and sent home immediately, in a safe and proper conveyance. The director of school health services shall immediately notify a local public health agency of any disease reportable under the public health law.

In addition, effective February 1, 2020, the 2019-Novel Coronavirus was added to Public Health Law as a significant threat to the public health, and NYS Commissioner of Health designated 2019-Novel Coronavirus as a communicable disease under 10 NYCRR Section 2.1.

**If a local health department informs the school that a student must comply with a quarantine order, but the child shows up to school, the school should contact the local health department immediately.**

If school staff or health services professionals have questions relating to 2019-nCoV and the impact on students who may have travelled to China, they should contact their local health department.

**Q. Can students who traveled to China before February 2, 2020 attend school?**

A. Yes, students who visited China and returned before February 2, 2020 should return to school, unless a local health department informs the school that a student must comply with a quarantine order.

If a student who has traveled in the last 14 days to areas [designated by CDC](#) as areas of risk for 2019-nCoV, AND they develop fever and respiratory symptoms (cough or difficulty breathing), the school should advise the parent or guardian to immediately call the local health department. The local health department can assist the family with determining what additional evaluation is needed and where it should take place.

Pursuant to Education Law § 906(1),

[w]henever, . . . a student in the public schools shows symptoms of any communicable or infectious disease reportable under the public health law that imposes a significant risk of infection of others in the school, he or she shall be excluded from the school and sent home immediately, in a safe and proper conveyance. The director of school health services shall immediately notify a local public health agency of any disease reportable under the public health law.

In addition, effective February 1, 2020, the 2019- Novel Coronavirus was added to Public Health Law as a significant threat to the public health, and NYS Commissioner of Health designated 2019- Novel Coronavirus as a communicable disease under 10 NYCRR Section 2.1.

**If a local health department informs the school that a student must comply with a quarantine order, but the child shows up to school, the school should contact the local health department immediately.**

**Q. Should any action be taken with respect to a student whose family member has recently traveled to China?**

A. No. There are currently no recommendations for any restriction of an individual who has not recently traveled to China, including family members. If schools have questions about symptomology or 2019-nCoV, the local department of health should be contacted.

**Q. What steps do I need to take to support students' educational needs?**

The Education Department strongly encourages all schools to send classroom work to students who have monitoring and movement restrictions in place due to the 2019 Novel Coronavirus. This can be done electronically or mailed to the student's home.

Schools are asked to encourage their medical directors to sign up for the NYS Center for School Health's medical directors' list serve in order to access up to date resources and information: 585-617-2380 or [nysch@monroe2boces.org](mailto:nysch@monroe2boces.org)

### **Additional Resources**

This is an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. We encourage you to keep up to date about 2019-nCoV, its treatment and prevention by visiting the following websites:

CDC's dedicated 2019-nCoV website at <https://www.cdc.gov/nCoV>.

NYSDOH's dedicated 2019-nCoV website at:

<https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>

In addition, NYS has established a Novel Coronavirus Hotline, which can provide additional information. Call 1-888-364-3065 with Questions or Concerns About Travel and Symptoms.

Contact information for your local Department of Health may be found at

[https://health.ny.gov/contact/contact\\_information/](https://health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/)

Attached is a template letter that may be used by Districts to inform parents about the 2019-nCoV.

Thank you for your continued partnership in this ever-changing situation. Your leadership is critical to ensure accurate information is given to parents, families, and communities around the state.

Sincerely,



Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D.  
Commissioner of Health



Shannon L. Tahoe  
State Education Commissioner