

## **NOVEL CORONAVIRUS PRECAUTIONARY**

As many of you are already aware, there is an outbreak of pneumonia in China, which has been identified to be caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. There are ongoing investigations by many countries to learn more about the outbreak, and the situation is rapidly evolving. *At this time there have been no reported cases in San Joaquin County or the Tracy Unified School District.*

On Friday, January 31, 2020, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) declared the novel corona virus a public health emergency in the United States. The declaration went into effect at 2 p.m. PST on Sunday, February, 2, 2020. As part of the emergency declaration, persons returning to the United States through select airports and considered to be at highest risk will be quarantined and monitored by public health officials. All other returning travelers from China will face a health screening and face up to two weeks of monitored self-quarantine to ensure they pose no health risk. Currently, there are six confirmed cases in California. This is a rapidly changing situation. Below you will find information on the novel coronavirus and actions that can be taken to prevent spread of respiratory illness. Also included is a FAQ sheet for distribution to members in your school community.

### **What is novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV)?**

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause diseases of varying severities, ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases, such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Coronaviruses usually exist exclusively in animals, but some can transmit from animals to humans, and some of those are also transmitted from person to person, while others are not. In general, transmission of coronaviruses is most likely while a person has symptoms. This is a new virus called a novel coronavirus because it is a new strain of coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans. The symptoms of novel coronavirus include fever, cough, and difficulty breathing. Health officials across the world are actively collecting information about clinical manifestations of this new virus and who is at risk for infection.

### **What are the signs and symptoms of the 2019-n-CoV?**

For confirmed 2019-nCoV infections, reported illnesses have ranged from people with little to no symptoms to people being severely ill and dying. Symptoms can include:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

The CDC believes at this time that symptoms of 2019-nCoV may appear in as few as 2 days or as long as 14 after exposure. This is based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of [MERS](#) viruses.

### **Should schools exclude students who recently traveled from China?**

The CDC asks that healthy travelers self-quarantine for 14 days and students who self-quarantine should be excused from school during this period. The quarantine is voluntary and is not monitored or enforced, and currently there is no guidance from state or federal officials regarding enforcement by schools, colleges or universities of the self-quarantine guidance. Persons identified at highest risk of developing illness are monitored by federal, state and/or local public health officials. If a high-risk person being monitored is a student, they will be excluded from school for 14 days from their last exposure.

### **Should staff or students wear masks?**

Currently, the CDC does not recommend that the wearing of masks be mandated for staff or students. The wearing of masks is common in many countries, and individuals should exercise their own discretion in their use. As always, it is recommended that persons who are ill stay home to limit transmission of all viruses.

### **For school nurses and student health centers, it is recommended that you:**

- Follow standard environmental infection control procedures for healthcare settings.
- When students complain of illness, ask about recent travel to China.
- Post signs that promote standard hygiene practices, such as:
  - Washing hands often with soap and water for 20 seconds
  - Using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Covering the nose and mouth with elbow or a tissue when coughing or sneezing.
- Avoiding touching eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoiding close contact with people who are sick.
- If you or someone you know has traveled to China and feel sick, please:
  - Stay home and avoid contact with others, except for seeking medical care.
  - Seek medical care right away, however before seeking care, call ahead to report recent travel and symptoms.
- Cover mouth and nose with a tissue or sleeve (not hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Wash hands frequently.

### **How is novel coronavirus treated?**

There is no vaccine for novel coronavirus. People who traveled to or from China or were in close contact with someone who was infected and develop a fever and respiratory symptoms within 14 days of their travel or exposure should seek medical care. There is no current specific treatment although scientists are working on testing medication options. Many of the symptoms can be treated, however, and effective treatment is based on the patient's clinical condition.

Your collaboration to inform the public and prevent the spread of the novel coronavirus is a valuable component of efforts to effectively protect our community and keep residents and visitors healthy. As additional information is learned and becomes available it will be communicated to you. Thank you for working to help the students and staff in San Joaquin County and Tracy Unified School District stay safe. Should you have additional questions about the coronavirus please contact the San Joaquin County Health Department (<http://www.sjcphs.org/>) or your physician.



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