



March 4, 2020

Dear Contra Costa Schools:

On Tuesday this week, Contra Costa Health Services (CCHS) identified the first confirmed community-transmitted case of novel coronavirus in the county.

CCHS and our school partners have been expecting COVID-19 in our communities, and we understand that schools have been bombarded with news about the spread of this virus, and that communities are asking questions that are hard to answer – Should schools close? Do I need a mask? Should someone be excluded?

It is time to prepare, to take simple steps to reduce the risk of transmission in your communities, and make people feel better. Here are things you can say to concerned community members or parents:

- **Your school has a plan.** Schools have emergency plans that help them decide when to take actions such as closing a campus or canceling events. If yours needs review, please prioritize that work.
- **Your school is informed.** CCHS works closely with the Office of Education to communicate the latest, most accurate health information about COVID-19. You can always find the latest – now including shareable video clips answering common questions – at cchealth.org/coronavirus.
- **If something happens, Public Health will be there.** If there's a case at your school, our health experts will quickly respond with guidance and action to keep your school as healthy as possible. CCHS will contact a school if we have any concerns specific to that school or district.

We get a lot of questions about whether a school should close if someone in its community has novel coronavirus. There is currently no federal, state or local guidance for wholesale school closures.

In the future, it might benefit public health to temporarily close a school – if doing so contains and stops the virus. However, if the virus is already in the community, a school closure won't prevent more cases. It may hurt children's education and the community.

The health department will consider closure on a case-by-case basis – and please call us before you make that decision. We advise school districts to contact Public Health with any specific questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

Ori Tzvieli, M.D.

Deputy Health Officer, Contra Costa County

