



March 17, 2020

Fellow North Dakota School Nurses,

As the medical source in your school, you will be looked to for direction on how to best keep your students, staff, and families safe and healthy. NDSNO will be continually working to provide you with updated information and sources to guide you in your role. NASN is also a leading resource for school nurses. [Coronavirus Disease 2019 Resources](#)

At the writing of this letter, North Dakota schools are in Phase 1, or the Preparedness Phase, per the CDC guidance. Here is NDSNO's guidance in this phase:

- **Stay calm and respond calmly.** The unknown is scary and others will mirror your reactions.
- **Stay current on facts regarding COVID-19 and the CDC's recommendations.** Be the medical advocate and make sure you are sharing accurate information. Be bold in correcting school decisions not based on facts or science. [Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) - Interim Guidance for Administrators of US Childcare Programs and K-12 Schools](#)
- **Remember not only the physical health but also the mental/emotional health of others.** Helping others deal with their anxieties in this situation will help them to understand and comprehend the facts. [Mental Health and Coping During COVID-19, Helping Children Cope with Emergencies](#)
- **Remind others to take their controller medications.** We want everyone to be proactive in their health and taking daily medications to help control chronic conditions is essential now and always.
- **Encourage good health habits in preventing illness.** School nurses are experts in giving information about the basics of keeping germs away. These include:
 - **Stay home when you are sick.** You will help prevent others from catching your illness. Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - **Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth.** Germs spread this way.
 - **Cover coughs and sneezes.** Use a tissue to cover coughs and sneezes, then dispose of the tissue. When a tissue is not available, cough or sneeze into your elbow. Follow up with hand washing.
 - **Clean and disinfect surfaces or objects.** Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces at home, work or school, especially when someone is ill.
 - **Wash hands for 20 seconds.** Washing hands often under clean, running water can help prevent the spread of germs. [When and How to Wash Your Hand](#) If you cannot wash your hands, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60-95% alcohol.
- **Encourage your school district to support absentee policies to reflect ease in students and staff staying home when they are sick.** This may include softening the current policy to eliminate incentives or penalties for missed school days. It may also include making school exclusion requirements stricter. All students and staff should be excluded if they display symptoms of coronavirus. These may include fever, cough, and shortness of breath. [Symptoms of Coronavirus Disease 2019](#)

- **Encourage social distancing.** This will help to flatten the curve and prevent new cases of COVID-19. When school is cancelled, families should not be going to places with large gatherings of people (i.e. malls, libraries, movie theaters, etc) unless necessary.
- **Take care of yourself.** You can't care for others if you are not well. Recognize your needs and care for them first.
- **Encourage your school to not adopt the intervention of taking student/staff temperatures before entering the building.** The CDC states, "Remember that schools are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps."

This is new territory for all of us and illustrates the importance of the work we do every day. We school nurses need to use our skills and training to assist our school in making the best decisions for the health and safety of everyone. We will endure and succeed!

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