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Introduction

The Chester County Health Department is taking proactive steps to protect the health of our county by making recommendations that are meant to slow the spread of novel coronavirus (COVID-19) and reduce the number of people infected.

We understand these actions will have a tremendous impact on the lives of people in our county. The Health Department is making these recommendations based on the best information we have to protect the public’s health at this time. These proactive steps are necessary for the growing outbreak of COVID-19 when such measures can potentially impact the spread of the disease.

This guidance will be updated as the situation develops.

What is the recommendation for individuals with chronic health conditions or weakened immune systems?

Individuals with chronic health conditions and/or weakened immune systems are at higher risk for COVID-19. The Chester County Health Department strongly recommends these individuals should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. This includes public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others such as concert venues, conventions, sporting events, festivals, and crowded social gatherings. If in doubt, individuals should consult their healthcare provider to decide the best course of action.

What is the recommendation for older individuals?

Older individuals, those over 60 years of age, are at higher risk for COVID-19. The Chester County Health Department strongly recommends these individuals should stay home and away from large groups of people as much as possible. This includes public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others such as concert venues, conventions, sporting events, festivals, and crowded social gatherings. If in doubt, individuals should consult their healthcare provider to decide the best course of action.

Should my school/organization close before a COVID-19 case has been identified?

The Chester County Health Department is not currently recommending that schools or organizations preemptively close as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak.

The reason we are not recommending school closures at this time is because:
• Children have not been shown to be a high risk group for serious illness from this virus. As much as possible, children should be allowed to carry on with their education and normal activities.

• Closing schools may not be effective because some children may congregate anyway at other locations therefore not reducing risk.

• Closing schools may result in children staying home with alternative caregivers, such as elders, who are more vulnerable.

Some individuals have underlying health conditions, such as weakened immune systems, that put them at higher risk. Caregivers of individuals with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether they should stay home.

Information continues to be evaluated about the effects of this disease, including risk for children and the risk that children may spread the disease to others. As it becomes available, public health will continue to evaluate the data and implement further response options.

The Health Department respects each individual school’s/organization’s decisions about closures, postponement of activities, or other social distancing measures as each knows the needs of their community best.

**What if my school/organization has a suspected case?**

In the event of a suspected case, symptomatic individuals will be isolated at home with the guidance of the Health Department. Close contacts of these individuals will be instructed to also isolate at home.

**What if my school/organization has a confirmed case?**

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 in a staff member or student, organizations will work with the Chester County Health Department to evaluate the individual’s whereabouts/activities to determine risk of exposure to others and receive guidance as to the extent of the organization’s interventions, up to and including closure. In the event of a suspected case, symptomatic individuals, and their close contacts, will be isolated at home with the guidance of the Health Department.
If my school/organization closes, what are the recommendations for childcare?

It is not recommended that children be cared for in large groups. Therefore, it is recommended that parents or other caregivers will likely have to stay home with children. It is important for parents/caregivers to understand their schools’/employers’ remote working options, and leave policies. Schools and organizations are encouraged to consider leave and remote work policies to facilitate social distancing measures.

What should my school/organization do about cleaning?

Cleaning guidance and disinfectant can be found at Chester County Health Department’s COVID-19 website under the school, businesses and families sections at: https://chesco.org/coronavirus

Should field trips, business trips, travel vacations be cancelled?

While there are currently no limitations on domestic U.S. travel at this time, individuals have a higher risk for COVID-19 if they travel to a country or state with known outbreaks, or have come in contact with someone who has the virus. As such, the Chester County Health Department strongly urges schools, businesses and families to re-assess if trips are essential and consider postponing or rescheduling. If trips are made, individuals are strongly urged to stay informed of the most up to date disease transmission information for that area by visiting:


Please keep in mind:

- COVID-19 will continue to spread in countries with identified cases and to new areas.
- Monitor travel advisories daily, including potential restrictions on border crossings.
- Countries may decide to implement travel restrictions with very little notice, impacting the ability to return home.
- Airlines, and other transportation industries, may cancel/limit flights in or out of a country or region.
- Additional quarantine measures may be applied by the U.S. or other counties.

What are the recommendations for students and families with planned travel during spring break/holidays?

Please see “should field trips, business trips, travel vacations be cancelled” above.
What is the recommendation for students/employees from impacted areas, including within the United States to enroll or begin employment?

If an individual is arriving from China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan in the last 14 days, they should be instructed to contact the Health Department at 610-344-6225 who will guide the required self-isolation for 14 days. See “COVID-19 Self-Monitoring at Home” guidance attached, or the County’s travel page for coronavirus.

The Chester County Health Department supports schools/organizations implementing its own self-isolation requirement for 14 days prior to starting school/employment regardless of travel or symptoms. Provide any individual in self-isolation with the “COVID-19 Self-Monitoring at Home” guidance attached, or the County’s travel page for coronavirus.

If a school/organization does not want to implement its own self-isolation requirement, the Health Department strongly encourages schools/organizations to consider assessing travel history and individual symptoms prior to starting school/employment.

**Travel History:** Has the individual:

- Traveled to China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan in the past 14 days
- Had contact with a person who became ill within 14 days of returning from China, Iran, Italy, South Korea, or Japan
- Had contact with an individual confirmed to have coronavirus

**Symptoms Assessment:** Does the individual have any of the following:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath

If the individual responded **YES** to **BOTH** travel history and symptoms the individual should **not** start school/employment and be directed to their physician.

If the individual responded **YES** to travel history and **NO** symptoms the individual should **not** start school/employment and be directed to contact the Health Department at 610-344-6225.

If the individual responded **NO** to travel history and **YES** symptoms the individual should **not** start school/employment and be directed remain home until they are symptom free for 24 hours.
If the individual is exhibiting signs or symptoms of COVID-19, the individual should be advised to self-isolate at home for 14 days. See “COVID-19 Self-Monitoring at Home” guidance attached, or the County’s travel page for coronavirus.

If the individual becomes ill upon arrival or during school/work:

- Send the individual home as soon as possible and provide the “COVID-19 See “COVID-19 Self-Monitoring at Home” guidance attached, or the County’s travel page for coronavirus.
- Keep sick individuals separate from well individuals until they can leave, and provide the individual a mask.

What is the recommendation for school/community gatherings?

Individuals at higher risk of severe illness should stay home and away from groups of people as much as possible, including public places with lots of people and large gatherings where there will be close contact with others. This includes concert venues, conventions, sporting events, and crowded social gatherings.

People at higher risk include people:

- Over 60 years of age
- With underlying health conditions including include heart disease, lung disease, or diabetes
- With weakened immune systems
- Who are pregnant

For schools/organizations, if you can feasibly avoid bringing small or large groups of people together, consider postponing events and gatherings. If you can't avoid bringing groups of people together:

- Urge anyone who is sick to not attend.
- Encourage those who are at higher risk for COVID-19 to not attend.
- Provide enough space to ensure six (6) feet of separation between individuals is available to avoid close contact, including congregate eating.
- Encourage attendees to maintain healthy hygiene such, such as frequent hand washing, coughing and sneezing elbow/tissue, and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth.
- Provide hand sanitizer to attendees.
- Clean surfaces before, during and after the event.

**Reminder: Personal precautions for staff and students**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough/sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash and wash your hands.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Stay home when you are sick, except to get medical care.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If you cannot wash your hands, use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Wash your hands after touching objects that other people may frequently touch, such as remotes, phones, door knobs, or money.