



## Talking Points: Schools and COVID-19

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- There is an expanding global outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus. The disease the virus causes has been named COVID-19.
  - While most COVID-19 cases are associated with travel to or from China, person-to-person spread is now being reported in other places, including Hong Kong, Iran, Italy, Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Taiwan and Thailand.
  - There are currently no cases of COVID-19 in Iowa. For the general public, who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is low; however, the ***potential*** of the public health threat is high.
- Advise parents that your school is working with state and local public health partners to review and update emergency plans.
- Advise parents that it is important to prepare for the potential of COVID-19 in the same way they prepare for severe weather or other events that could disrupt their normal routine.
  - Make a plan and discuss it with your family. What would you do if you could not go to work or school because of illness? What if your daycare provider was ill? How would you get groceries if you were ill? These are all questions to think about.
- Advise parents that it is normal to be concerned about a new virus.
  - Being uncertain and anxious about COVID-19 is normal, especially with reports of illness and death in other countries.
  - It is important to understand the risk of influenza is much higher than the risk of COVID-19 in Iowa right now.
- Advise parents that while COVID-19 is not currently circulating in Iowa, influenza is circulating at high levels. The prevention measures for influenza and COVID-19 are the same.
  - Cover your coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your upper arm/elbow
  - Clean your hands frequently with soap and water
  - Contain germs by staying home when ill
    - Advise parents that your school is promoting proper hand washing by providing opportunities for hand washing and appropriate supplies.
    - Also communicate that your school is continuing regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces.
    - Advise parents that it is critical for their children to stay home when they are ill.