

GARRISON FOREST SCHOOL

300 GARRISON FOREST ROAD • OWINGS MILLS, MARYLAND 21117

Dear GFS Parents and Families,

We are writing to update you on Garrison Forest's response related to the novel coronavirus, now referred to as COVID-19. This virus has now been detected in nearly 70 locations internationally, including cases in the United States, and the situation continues to evolve rapidly. There are currently no confirmed cases of the virus in Maryland, and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes the risk to the general American public is currently low. However, as always, the health and safety of our students and community members is our top priority, and our goal is to keep you as informed as possible throughout this time.

GFS PREPAREDNESS

While the risk is still very low to our community right now, we are reviewing our crisis and contingency plans, as well as evaluating upcoming programs, to be sure we are prepared for any disruptions. Our team actively monitors all updates relating to the virus, travel restriction updates, state and federal mandates and our local peer schools and continues to reevaluate our next steps on a daily basis.

SPRING BREAK

With Spring Break nearly upon us, we want to ensure that our students, faculty, staff and parents who may be traveling over Spring Break take proper precautions.

For community members planning to travel during Spring Break:

- Be sure you [check any restrictions put forth by the country you'll be traveling to](#) before you depart and continue monitoring the situation throughout your travel. Have a back-up plan in case your arrangements are suddenly interrupted due to changing restrictions.
- At this point, GFS Spring Break trips--including those to India and Spain/Greece--will proceed as planned. We'll continue to actively monitor all destinations; should the situation or travel recommendations in those countries change prior to the trip, contingency plans will be put into place. Rest assured that faculty and staff accompanying students on these trips will be vigilant, as always, in keeping the group safe. Parents of students going on those trips will receive additional information from the faculty/staff chaperone.
- As far as we know, no members of the GFS residential life community will be traveling to countries designated as a Level 3 or 4 Travel Risk by the CDC. To accommodate students who experienced a disruption in travel plans, some of our dorms will be open and supervision will be provided throughout Spring Break.

Returning to the US/GFS:

- Any student or faculty/staff member returning from an international trip with a potentially contagious condition should consult their physician immediately and should not return to campus until given the all-clear.
- Though unlikely, any community member who knows or is concerned that they may have been exposed to COVID-19 is required to report that upon re-entry into the United States. Please note that the US has a

mandated quarantine period for those who may have been exposed to the virus.

- Our Health Center has briefed our faculty and staff on signs and symptoms of the virus. Any students with questions or concerns once they arrive back on campus should visit the Health Center to speak with a medical professional.

STAYING HEALTHY

Again, the risk to our community for COVID-19 is currently small; however, this is a good time to revisit common sense guidelines for avoiding all types of contagious illnesses. In addition to this virus, the flu is especially prevalent this year, so we encourage our entire community to keep their health top of mind. Habits like thoroughly washing your hands regularly, covering up coughs and sneezes, disinfecting high-touch surfaces and remaining home if you don't feel well will go a long way in reducing the spread of any illnesses.

STAYING INFORMED

While we are actively monitoring this situation on a daily basis, we encourage all of our community members to do the same in order to keep themselves healthy and make informed decisions about their own travel and plans. Keep an eye on reputable news sources to ensure you have the information you need. Here are a few resources:

- [COVID-19 information for Travelers \(CDC\)](#)
- [World Health Organization: Coronavirus](#)
- [Frequently Asked Questions: Guidance for Schools About the Novel Coronavirus \(COVID-19\)](#)
- [White Paper developed by PRA Health Sciences](#)

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

Our goal is to inform, not alarm. With near-constant press coverage and the rapidly changing nature of the situation, many people may be feeling anxious, including your children. If you are looking for productive ways to discuss the virus with your child, please see this [New York Times](#) article and this [USA TODAY](#) article for guidance.

As we mentioned in our previous communication, the wellbeing of our entire school community, physical as well as emotional, is always at the forefront of everything we do. As a school that is proud to have an international student population, we will also be ensuring that our students from areas most affected by this situation feel supported throughout a period that is very concerning for them and their families. I encourage all of our community members to be mindful of this as well.

Please know that we will continue to monitor the situation and provide any updates as needed. Don't hesitate to contact us, your Division Head or our Health Center if you have any questions or concerns.

Best wishes,

Chris Hughes
Head of School

Chanda Frey Grimes, RN
Director of Health Center



