This week's message (Be sure to CLICK the blue font for links):

Schools may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Schools may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

- **Protections for Staff and Children at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19**
  - Offer options for staff at higher risk for severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., telework, modified job responsibilities).
  - Offer options for students at higher risk of severe illness that limit their exposure risk (e.g., virtual learning opportunities).
  - Consistent with applicable law, put in place policies to protect the privacy of people at higher risk for severe illness regarding underlying medical conditions.
- **Regulatory Awareness**
  - Be aware of local or state regulatory agency policies related to group gatherings to determine if events can be held.
- **Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips**
  - Pursue virtual group events, gatherings, or meetings, if possible, and promote social distancing of at least 6 feet between people if events are held. Limit group size to the extent possible.
  - Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as possible – especially with individuals who are not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, county).
  - Pursue virtual activities and events in lieu of field trips, student assemblies, special performances, school-wide parent meetings, and spirit nights, as possible.
  - Pursue options to convene sporting events and participation in sports activities in ways that minimizes the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to players, families, coaches, and communities.
- **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping Them Together (Cohorting)**
  - Ensure that student and staff groupings are as static as possible by having the same group of children stay with the same staff (all day for young children, and as much as possible for older children).
  - Limit mixing between groups if possible.
- **Staggered Scheduling**
  - Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort or put in place other protocols to limit contact between cohorts and direct contact with parents as much as possible.
  - When possible, use flexible worksites (e.g., telework) and flexible work hours (e.g., staggered shifts) to help establish policies and practices for social distancing (maintaining distance of approximately 6 feet) between

employees and others, especially if social distancing is recommended by state and local health authorities.

- **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**
  - o Designate a staff person to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns (e.g., school nurse). All school staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.
- **Participation in Community Response Efforts**
  - o Consider participating with local authorities in broader COVID-19 community response efforts (e.g., sitting on community response committees).
- **Communication Systems**
  - o Put systems in place for:
    - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff and families self-report to the school if they or their student have symptoms of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with health information sharing regulations for COVID-19external icon (e.g. see "Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts" in the **Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below**) and other applicable federal and state laws and regulations relating to privacy and confidentiality, such as the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).
    - Notifying staff, families, and the public of school closures and any restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).
- **Leave (Time Off) Policies and Excused Absence Policies**
  - o Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices that enable staff to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or caring for someone who is sick.
    - ▪ Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
    - ▪ Leave policies should be flexible and not punish people for taking time off, and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
  - o Develop policies for return-to-school after COVID-19 illness. CDC's criteria to discontinue home isolation and quarantine can inform these policies.
- **Back-Up Staffing Plan**
  - o Monitor absenteeism of students and employees, cross-train staff, and create a roster of trained back-up staff.
- **Staff Training**
  - o Train staff on all safety protocols.
  - o Conduct training virtually or ensure that social distancing is maintained during training.
- **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**

- o If feasible, conduct daily health checks (e.g., temperature screening and/or or [symptom checking](#)) of staff and students.
  - o Health checks should be conducted safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy laws and regulations. School administrators may use examples of screening methods in CDC's supplemental [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) as a guide for screening children and CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) for screening staff.
- **Sharing Facilities**
  - o Encourage any organizations that share or use the school facilities to also follow these considerations.
- **Support Coping and Resilience**
  - o Encourage employees and students to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.
  - o Promote employees and students eating healthy, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
  - o Encourage employees and students to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
  - o Consider posting signages for the national distress hotline: [1-800-985-5990](#), or text TalkWithUsto 66746

https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/video-coronavirus-faqs.html?ref=search

https://kidshealth.org/en/parents/coronavirus-stop-spread.html?ref=search