March 2, 2020

The Norton City School System and the LENOWISCO Health District with the Virginia Department of Health are closely monitoring an outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (termed "COVID-19"). A novel coronavirus is a new coronavirus strain that has not been previously found in people. Symptoms have included fever, cough and difficulty breathing. On January 21, 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) announced the first confirmed case in the United States in a traveler returning from Wuhan, China. To date there have been no cases of COVID-19 disease diagnosed in the state of Virginia.

The CDC considers the immediate risk of COVID-19 infection to the general American public low at this time.

We partner closely with our public health and healthcare providers to build on the work we do every day to keep our students safe and healthy and to prevent and control outbreaks of disease. We have plans and systems in place from our work to prepare and respond to diseases that have emerged in the past, like SARS, H1N1 Influenza, Zika, Ebola and Hepatitis A.

What you can do to reduce your risk of infection?

Because COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, much like the flu, many of the strategies we use to reduce the spread of the flu can help prevent respiratory illnesses of any kind:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, and help young children do the same. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol. Wash your hands especially after coughing and sneezing, before and after caring for an ill person, and before preparing foods and before eating.
- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze and then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact (such as kissing, sharing cups, or sharing eating utensils) with people who are sick.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces and objects, such as toys and doorknobs, especially if someone is sick.
- Stay home when you are sick, except when you need to get medical care.

We will continue to keep you updated.

RESOURCES

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus
- The World Health Organization's website: https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019
- The Virginia Department of Health website: http://www.vdh.virginia.gov/surveillance-and-investigation/novel-coronavirus/
- 1-877-ASK-VDH3 (1-877-275-8343)