



Considerations for School Nurses Regarding Care of Students and Staff that Become Ill at School or Arrive Sick

Disclaimer statement: This document provides a summary of currently available resources that school nurses can consult as they formulate independent nursing judgement for their practice or when participating in policy discussions in their districts. This document is not intended to provide clinical standards or guidelines. The school nurse is responsible for complying with applicable federal, state, and local laws, regulations, ordinances, executive orders, policies, and any other applicable sources of authority, including any applicable standards of practice.

School nurses are essential healthcare providers in the community working on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic in schools. For schools currently operating as well as planning for schools to re-open, there are key activities that school nurse should be focused on related to COVID-19.

CDC Provides guidance on an isolation plan if someone arrives or becomes ill at school. The definition of **Isolation** “separates sick people with a contagious disease from people who are not sick” (CDC, 2017).

The school plan should include the following:

- Follow [CDC School Isolation Protocol](#) guidance:
- In addition:
 - Evaluate the current school nurse designated space and determine if there is an adjacent space for isolation.
 - If an adjacent space is not available, consider moving the school nurse work area to another larger location with a separate adjacent space. Consideration of ventilation such as windows and an outside door is preferable to reduce the spread of disease for isolated individuals exiting the building. Computer, phone, internet, and restrooms with handwashing facilities are required in the school nurse designated space.
 - Students placed in isolation space must be monitored by staff wearing medical grade Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and kept in line of sight for safe practice.
- The use of facemasks for persons with respiratory symptoms, fever over 100.4, and other COVID-19 like symptoms is recommended if available and tolerated by the person and developmentally appropriate.
- Schools are not usually expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. If a school has positive cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps.

- Work closely with communication staff for the school/school system and local public health to share resources with the school community to help families understand when to keep children home. The resources could include information on COVID-19, but also should discuss issues such as stress/anxiety, abuse, caring for self, cultural sensitivity/stigma, and community resources that may be needed during this time.
 - Consider a webpage for families with links to CDC and state health departments, as well as other reputable sources addressing the needs of your population.
 - Send regular updates to families on social media, email and other formats as available to school systems.
 - Coordinate efforts with parent teacher association and other groups.
 - Share NASN Return to School Hygiene Video Series created for the school community on hand washing, face coverings, and stay home when you are sick.
 - [COVID-19 NASN Return-to-school-video-series](#)
 - Be actively involved in developing school emergency operation plans. Be sure the plan addresses communicable disease outreach, communication, distance working, etc.
 - Resource: https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf
- Work with your local health department related to outreach activities.
- Coordinate with school administration and families to determine when and how students' school medication and supplies can be safely transported back and forth to school as indicated between in person and virtual instruction periods.
- Develop a list of resources that families may need during this time such as local food pantries, health centers, etc. Distribute the list to families, as these needs may be new to families and they are unaware of community resources.
- Identify your students most vulnerable/at-risk for COVID-19 as well as if schools close and create a plan to address potential needs.
- Establish procedures to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible.
 - Use a flow chart for unlicensed staff and school administrators to follow if the school nurse is not present 100% of the time in the school.
 - Ex - [COVID-19 Symptom Screener for Students](#)
 - Refer parents of high-risk students to their healthcare providers to determine when school re-entry is recommended.
 - Send ill staff immediately home with administrative support, and isolate students if caregivers are not present to immediately take them home.
 - Train unlicensed assistive personal on the administration of the flow chart, proper temperature taking procedure, and the use of PPE, including eye protection, gowns, gloves, and facemasks.
 - Create a plan for a respiratory protection program as outlined in the Guidance for Healthcare Personnel on PPE in Schools document. ([PPE Document](#))

- N95 masks are recommended for healthcare providers and must be fitted to ensure proper protection. School nurses should work with local public health and or other health organization to meet this requirement.
- If N95 masks are not available due to supply issues, other facemasks may be used.
 - See CDC Strategies for Optimizing PPE:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>
 - Guidance for Healthcare Personnel on PPE Use in Schools
[Guidance-for-Healthcare-Personnel-on-PPE-Use-in-Schools.pdf](#)
- Establish a process for handwashing or the use of hand sanitizers prior to or directly upon school building entry and several enhanced times during the school day.
 - Although hand sanitizer can be used, handwashing is the preferred method if available.
- Additional thermometers, PPE, and hand sanitizer may be available from local health departments state stockpiles.
- Using a tracking form, track students with symptoms of COVID-19 and report to local public health for follow up.
 - [NASN Sample Tracking Form](#)
- Work closely with designated local public health for procedures for re-entry when schools have been closed for more than 2 weeks.

Additional recommendations have been set forth by CDC once a confirmed case of COVID-19 has been identified in your school. The following references also provides guidance for confirmed cases.

REFERENCES:

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2020, September 1). *Operating schools during COVID-19: CDC's considerations.* , <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/guidance-for-schools.html>



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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, (2020, July 16). *Strategies for Optimizing the Supply of PPE.* <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>

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National Association of School Nurses. (2020). *COVID-19 symptom screener for students.*

<https://higherlogicdownload.s3.amazonaws.com/NASN/3870c72d-fff9-4ed7-833f-215de278d256/UploadedImages/PDFs/COVID-19-Symptom-Screener-for-Students.pdf>

National Association of School Nurses. (2020). *Guidance for healthcare personnel on PPE use in schools.*

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National Association of School Nurses. (2020). *NASN Sample COVID-19 tracking tool.*

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US Department of Education. *Guide for developing high-quality school emergency operation plans.* https://rems.ed.gov/docs/REMS_K-12_Guide_508.pdf