

# Frequently Asked Questions Relating to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) and Abilene ISD

*\*\*Policies and guidelines are subject to change due to executive orders from our state government and local health guidance in the constant changing COVID-19 environment.*

## **What is the Coronavirus or COVID-19 virus?**

The novel (new) Coronavirus, also known as COVID-19, is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID-19 is a novel (new) coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in Wuhan, China.

## **What are the symptoms of COVID-19?**

Patients with COVID-19 have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of

- Fever or chills
- Cough
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

This list does not include all possible symptoms. CDC will continue to update this list as we learn more about COVID-19.

## **How is the COVID-19 virus spread?**

According to the CDC, the virus that causes COVID-19 belongs to a family of viruses called “coronavirus.” There are other viruses in the coronavirus family that can cause illness in both humans and animals. These viruses can cause either mild illness like a cold or can make people very sick with pneumonia. This particular coronavirus has not been seen previously in humans. The virus is likely to be spread from person to person.

Since the virus is very new, health authorities continue to carefully watch how this virus spreads.

### **How will I know if I or my children have the flu or COVID-19?**

While both these illnesses are respiratory viruses with symptoms of fever and a cough, it is recommended that anyone experiencing these symptoms visit a healthcare provider for diagnosis and treatment.

### **What can I do to prevent being infected or spreading the virus?**

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Wash your hands frequently.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in a covered trash can.
- If you do not have a tissue, use your sleeve (not your hands).
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

### **What is the district doing to protect students and staff?**

Abilene ISD is following the guidance of the City of Abilene, Taylor County Health Department and the Texas Department of Health and Human Services who work closely with the CDC, local governments, and health care providers to prepare for and respond to the evolving COVID-19 situation.

In addition the AISD established a community-based task force to analyze survey feedback from the community concerning the in-person opening of schools. The task force filtered through more than 2,500 recommendations from the community regarding safety and health protocols for starting school on Aug. 20. The task force went through a thorough process gaining input from each member over the course of three meetings and then ranked the prospective measures.

A summary of these recommendations and the process that generated them was shared with the board on July 9. The school board and administration value this input greatly and will use it as we work to finalize the district's plans for a safe reopening of schools in August.

Abilene ISD Health Services has issued guidance for school nurses to use in identifying and assessing the health status of students or staff who are experiencing flu-like symptoms.

### **What will the district do if someone at a school or office is diagnosed with COVID-19?**

If both exposure and symptoms of fever or respiratory illness are present in a student, nurses are instructed to inform the principal, isolate the individual and ensure both the student and nurse are wearing masks before contacting Abilene ISD Health Services for additional guidance.

Where necessary, cleaning and disinfection will take place in accordance with AISD Departmental Operation Procedures.

If an employee has been confirmed to have contracted COVID-19 they must immediately communicate with their supervisor who will follow the [decision making flowchart](#) for exposure or diagnosis of COVID-19. Human Resources will contact you to discuss available leave options.

### **What are some other sources of information and updates?**

The following resources are available to help the public stay informed about COVID-19.

- The City of Abilene <https://abilenetx.gov/covid19>
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV>
- The Texas Department of Health and Human Services <https://hhs.texas.gov/services/health/coronavirus-covid-19>
- Abilene ISD school nurses and the district's Health Services Department are also trusted sources of information. <https://www.abileneisd.org/departments/health-services/>
- [TEA Public Health Guidance](#)
- Texas Agri-Life Extension - [Special Considerations for infection control during COVID-19](#)
- FFCRA - [Families First Coronavirus Response Act: Employee Paid Leave Rights](#)

AISD Resources:

- [AISD Flow Charts for Sick Employees and Exposed or Diagnosed Employees](#)
- [AISD Coronavirus Information Page](#)

### **Will schools be closed if there is an outbreak of COVID-19?**

School closure is one of several options available to district leadership. The district will work with local / state agencies and medical professionals to determine if closures are needed. In many instances, periods of building closure may be brief, isolated or unnecessary.

### **What is being done to keep schools clean and protect students?**

Custodial staff on each campus have everything necessary to ensure each campus is thoroughly cleaned and disinfected each day. During the school day individual classrooms will be wiped down periodically depending on the age of students they serve. The district will perform extra cleaning of schools and district offices as needed based on conditions. School buses will also go through regularly scheduled cleaning as part of the district's comprehensive COVID-19 protocol.

### **What is available for my student if they have fears and concerns about the virus?**

Counselors are prepared to speak with students about their concerns. As needs arise within our student population for support, the district will assess the need and allocate resources as appropriate, while always keeping the social emotional health of our students as the priority.

### **What if I am traveling or have recently traveled?**

Abilene ISD continues to monitor travel advisories and recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), as well as our state and county health authorities. The COVID-19 outbreak is a concern for anyone considering traveling at this time. Those with travel plans are strongly encouraged to closely monitor travel advisories and guidance from the CDC. We respectfully request that if you or any member of your household is traveling or has recently traveled internationally, including cruises, please inform your supervisor. Further, Abilene ISD asks for any students or employees who

are traveling, or have members of their households traveling, to any countries added to the CDC Level 2 and 3 lists to contact their supervisor as the employee may be required to stay home for 14 days after returning from travel. Abilene ISD will work with each family or staff member impacted during this extended absence to resolve any attendance issues due to self-quarantine from travel or other exposure.

For the most recent information please visit the CDC's Travel webpage at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>

### **How will faculty and staff prepare for reopening?**

All staff will receive training on new health and safety protocols related to COVID-19 including sanitization, scheduling, do's and don'ts, signs of infection, facts related to COVID-19, and current guidance from state and local health officials.

### **How will AISD ensure social distancing in classrooms?**

Measures will be implemented for students to maintain social distancing while following guidance from state agencies, who at this time have not set a classroom limitation. Depending on the specific class size and the ability to safely distance, AISD will make adjustments specific to the space and classroom logistics.

### **Are staff and students required to wear face masks?**

Staff and students (kindergarten and older) will be required to wear facial coverings. Each person that arrives without a mask will be provided one, while supplies are available within AISD. Due to limited national supply, staff and students will be encouraged to bring their own. Exceptions will be considered for those who have a diagnosed medical condition restricting the safe use of a face mask.

### **How will meals be offered to students?**

Each campus is unique and a combination of cafeteria, other large spaces and classroom will be used for meals. Expanded lunch times will also be considered. Your campus principal will communicate campus specific procedures as those decisions are finalized. Social distancing will be an important consideration. This is to ensure safety for students and staff and is in line with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Texas Education Agency recommendations.

### **What measures are in place for students to disinfect?**

Frequent handwashing practices will be implemented, including easily accessible hand sanitizer dispensers stationed in each classroom and across the campus at a majority of doors and entrances.

**The six criteria established by the U.S. Department of Labor that define an individual who is eligible for FFCRA Employee Paid Sick Leave (EPSL) as an employee who:**

1. is subject to a Federal, State, or local quarantine or isolation order related to COVID-19;
2. has been advised by a health care provider to self-quarantine related to COVID-19;
3. is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms and is seeking a medical diagnosis;
4. is caring for an individual subject to an order described in (1) or self-quarantine as described in (2);
5. is caring for a child whose school or place of care is closed (or child care provider is unavailable) for reasons related to COVID-19; or
6. is experiencing any other substantially-similar condition specified by the Secretary of Health and Human Services, in consultation with the Secretaries of Labor and Treasury.