

## **West Branch Community School District Pandemic or Infectious Disease Plan**

Schools tend to be affected by infectious disease outbreaks more than other settings. Children easily transmit illnesses to one another as a result of their close proximity, their inefficiency at containing respiratory droplets and their ineffective hand washing. As a school district, we play an important role in protecting the health of our students and staff from contagious diseases.

This pandemic or infectious disease plan provides guidance for reducing illness at school on a regular basis as well as procedures during infectious disease outbreaks and pandemic periods.

The plan includes the following:

1. Strategies to prevent and reduce the spread of infectious diseases at our schools.
2. Procedures for canceling school due to an infectious disease outbreak.
3. Considerations for reopening schools.

Notification of confirmed pandemic or infectious disease threat to the district will come from Cedar County Public health (CCPH).

- CCPH Disease Prevention Specialists will notify the West Branch Community School District (WBCSD) nurse in the event that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) declares a pandemic event or an infectious disease threat to the district.
  - The WBCSD nurse will receive guidance from CCPH Disease Prevention Specialists regarding parent communication.
- The WBCSD nurse will notify the WBCSD Superintendent.
- The Superintendent will notify WBCSD Administration.
  - The Superintendent and Administration will work with the school district nurse to send communication to parents/guardians, students, and staff.
- The WBCSD nurse will work with the Superintendent and Administration on the WBCSD Pandemic or Infectious Disease Plan.

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## **STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

**How Germs Spread:** Illnesses such as the flu (influenza), Norovirus (sudden and violent nausea, vomiting and diarrhea), and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, lungs and gastrointestinal tract. Flu and cold viruses usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the virus is inhaled by another person. Norovirus is spread by infected persons passing germs through food or ineffective hand washing. Germs are also spread by droplets when a person touches something that is contaminated with a virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. The length of time germs can live on certain surfaces depends on the virus.

**Disease Prevention & Education:** To help prevent the spread of any infectious disease, schools have an opportunity to educate students, staff, and the community on social etiquette, good health and hygiene habits, and disease prevention. WBCSD will provide education and reminders on hand washing, coughing, and sneezing any time there is a suspected outbreak and during the school year as requested by staff. WBCSD will have current illness/disease prevention information on the WBCSD website. During times of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, the school district will coordinate with CCPH to address the outbreak.

Our basic educational message is:

- Cover your cough
- Wash your hands often
- Stay home if you're sick
- Wear appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) as provided by family if needed

**Cover Your Cough:** Teach students coughing and sneezing etiquette in classrooms and hang instructional posters in the school buildings. Have ample supply of tissues available in each classroom and school area.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands after you cough or sneeze, or use hand sanitizer.

**Wash Your Hands Often:** Hand washing with soap and warm water is the best option. Hand sanitizers can be effective when there is no access to water, they are most effective if they have at least 60% alcohol in them. Staff are encouraged to provide time and opportunity each day for students to practice washing their hands with soap and water upon arrival at school, after coughing and/or sneezing in hands, at the beginning of the lunch line before eating, after bathroom use, and after recess.

- Wet hands with water, apply soap and scrub hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Thoroughly rinse under warm, running water.
- Dry hands completely with a paper towel. Use a paper towel to turn off faucet handles and open restroom doors. If there are air dryers in the restrooms, rub hands vigorously together under the dryer until completely dry.

- **Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette Websites:**

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>

Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)

[https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/Files/AntibioticResistance/tab2\\_handwashing.pdf](https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/Files/AntibioticResistance/tab2_handwashing.pdf)

Mayo Clinic

<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/hand-washing/art-20046253>

National Science Foundation (NSF) Scrub Club

<https://www.scrubclub.org/index/php>

**Stay Home if You're Sick:** A primary strategy against the spread of illness is for sick people to stay home from school. This includes students, staff and volunteers. In times of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, sick leave policies for staff and students will be reviewed, modified (if needed), clearly communicated, and consistently enforced.

**Wear Appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment):** When working with students with suspected infectious disease, staff will wear PPE; such as exam gloves and face masks.

**Illness/Disease Monitoring & Tracking:** During times of a potential infectious disease outbreak, building secretaries will inform the nurse of increased absenteeism due to illness. If a building has 10% or more of their total enrollment absent due to illness, the nurse will report it to the Iowa Department of Public Health through their online reporting system (<https://redcap.idph.state.ia.us/surveys/?s=C4XNALH3R9>). The district nurse will implement a surveillance system to detect unusual rates of illness in schools ([Pandemic Screening Sheet](#)). School nurses and building secretaries will monitor illnesses daily and track illness trends. The nurse will monitor absentee rates, illness trends/patterns, and report to CCPH.

Staff are trained to be alert to children who are ill. Examples of symptoms include fever, frequent cough and/or sneezing, sore throat, and vomiting/diarrhea. Symptomatic students need to be sent to the nurse's office for evaluation.

During periods of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks.

- The nurse and staff providing health care should protect themselves by wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when deemed necessary. This includes gown, gloves, eye protection, and facial mask.
- Students who have a cough/sneezing with a fever will stay in the health office and will be distanced to the extent possible from healthy students until parents arrive. Having the sick person distanced can help to slow or prevent the spread of disease.

**Disinfection & Cleaning Procedures:** Keep commonly touched surfaces such as stairway railings, door handles, computer keyboards, bathroom faucets and surfaces, drinking fountains, telephones, and elevator buttons clean by wiping down with a disinfectant. During an infectious disease outbreak, consideration will be given to increasing the frequency of cleaning these commonly touched surfaces and areas based on the nature of the disease. In addition, we will consult with CCPH for guidance on any necessary operational procedures that need to be enacted (i.e. changing HVAC filters, specialized disinfectants to use, closing rooms for a period of time, proper ventilation, etc.). When an employee or student with a suspected infectious disease is identified and has left the building, it is important that their work area, along with any other known places they have been, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Clean the surface to remove dirt and soil with a cleaning agent and disinfect following manufacturers' recommendations. The person cleaning and disinfecting (usually a custodian) should wear a mask and gloves and should discard cleaning clothes afterwards. Hands must be washed or sanitized at the

completion of the procedure. During times of a specifically known or suspected disease outbreak, the school district will consult with CCPH for guidance.

**Buses:** WBCSD employs a transportation director. The Superintendent will contact the transportation director should an infectious disease break out. According to their procedures, school buses are cleaned by the drivers on a regular basis during the normal school year. However, during periods of suspected or confirmed infectious disease outbreak, consideration will be given to increasing the frequency of cleaning schedules, based on the nature and spread of the disease and guidance from CCPH. Additional airflow can be accomplished on buses by opening selected windows and the top hatches if outside temperatures can allow that air flow without causing harm to students.

**Nutrition Services Food Safety/Sanitation Protocols:** The WBCSD Nutrition Services Department follows safe food handling and storage practices from receiving through meal service. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles are followed in each step of the food preparation process. Nutrition staff receive training upon hire and at least three times a year which includes education on good personal hygiene and proper food handling practices. Staff are not allowed to come to work if they have a fever, diarrhea, jaundice, or vomiting. During periods of suspected or confirmed infectious disease outbreak, modifications may be considered to services based on the severity and nature of the outbreak. This could include discontinuing the use of self-serve salad bars, serving sack lunches instead of cafeteria style lunches, and having more stringent sick employee policies.

**Social Distancing:** During suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, several social distancing measures can be taken to reduce the spread of an infectious disease. Discourage hand shaking. Discourage the sharing of drinks or food. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Avoid face-to-face meetings, however, if unavoidable, maintain a distance between individuals as determined by public health. Cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, assemblies, field trips, workshops, or training as deemed necessary by the superintendent in collaboration with public health. Consider flexible hours and attendance policies to maintain social distancing and reduce illness in district facilities.

**Where to Get Information:** If an infectious disease outbreak or pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical. Here are several websites to consult.

Centers of Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

World Health Organization (WHO)  
<https://www.who.int/>

Iowa Department of Public Health  
<https://www.idph.iowa.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)  
<https://www.hhs.gov/>

## CANCELLING SCHOOL DUE TO AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

WBCSD will collaborate with CCPH and IDPH to monitor disease outbreaks in our schools and to determine if and when school should be cancelled. The information provided by these health departments will also guide WBCSD decisions on the length of time for a school closure and the extent of the closure (single school closure, neighboring schools, partial district, entire district, etc.), taking into consideration the mixing of students/staff across schools, geographic proximity, outbreaks at neighboring school districts, etc.

**Legal Authorities for Cancellation of School:** The WBCSD Superintendent has the authority to cancel classes when it is deemed necessary for the health and safety of students and staff. In the Superintendent's absence, a designee will carry that authority.

If school is cancelled due to an infectious disease outbreak, all other school-related gatherings (athletic events, concerts, after school activities, field trips, etc.) will also be cancelled. In some cases, non-academic events may be cancelled even if classes are not cancelled.

**Communicating with Stakeholders during an Infectious Disease Outbreak:** WBCSD will attempt to provide accurate, consistent, and timely communication with staff, students, and parents. We will coordinate with CCPH to disseminate critical information from the health department, to develop and deliver health messages and educational materials to families as information is received. Information will be disseminated via our normal emergency mass communication methods.

**Continuity of Operations Plan:** Certain essential district-level functions will need to continue even during a school closure situation. Essential services may include:

- Payroll, Accounts Payable
- Communications, Technology (website, press releases, learning at home resources, etc.).
- Facilities Coordination
- Emergency Operations Center (planning for reopening of schools)

Identify essential personnel who will be needed to carry out essential services and determine if those services can be accomplished at home (by computer, through emails, conference calls, using Skype, etc.) or by staggering work schedules and locations and using social distancing measures. Essential personnel who report to work during a school closure should take precautions; Personal Protective Equipment and social distancing as recommended by public health departments.

**Learning at Home:** To help students stay educationally engaged while classes are cancelled, WBCSD may provide a variety of Learning at Home resources for students. While not mandatory, we encourage students to use the resources provided in the event of a school cancellation.

**Staff Leave:** In the case of school closures, information will be communicated to employees regarding the appropriate type of leave to be used.

## REOPENING SCHOOLS

Our primary objective in the recovery phase is to restore the learning environment as soon as possible. Issues to consider include determining if schools need disinfection measures before reopening, staffing levels, and grief/mental health issues. The Superintendent's office may also need to develop a plan for students/staff to make up for lost school days.

As the district resumes normal operation, it will remain in contact with CCPH and IDPH regarding disease surveillance. An infectious disease outbreak often comes in waves and the response and recovery process may be repeated several times.

**Disinfection:** Disinfection needs will depend primarily on the severity, type, and duration of the pandemic. Viruses can live an extended period outside the human body on nonporous surfaces such as plastic, metal or wood (depending on the virus). Guidance will be obtained from CCPH and IDPH regarding our cleaning policy and practices.

**Personnel:** If there are multiple staff absences due to an infectious disease outbreak, a plan will be formulated to continue instructional programs and operations within the district. District officials will also coordinate with the transportation director regarding staffing abilities for bus drivers.

**Mental health issues:** Depending on the severity of the outbreak, WBCSD will collaborate with our local mental health partners to assist with providing students and staff with appropriate support.

**Making up school days:** The Superintendent's office will collaborate with the Iowa Department of Education to develop a plan for making up lost school days, if needed.