



State of Utah

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Utah Department of Health

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February 11, 2020

Dear Dr. Dickson:

The Utah Department of Health (UDOH) is actively monitoring the ongoing outbreak of novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) that began in China and has subsequently spread to several other countries, including the United States. The UDOH is coordinating closely with public health partners and medical care providers throughout the state, and also with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Though the CDC considers COVID-19 to be a serious public health concern based on current information, the immediate health risk to the general U.S. public is considered low.

While there are currently no confirmed cases of novel coronavirus in Utah, we have investigated – and ruled out – several potential cases. This is not to say we won't see confirmed cases in the future. In fact, I expect Utah will eventually have confirmed cases, and I am confident we are prepared to handle those cases.

I recognize Utah schools and parents are likely concerned about the current situation. To help address these concerns, I would like to share the following information on what you can do to protect your students, staff, and employees from COVID-19.

The symptoms of novel coronavirus are similar to what someone may be experiencing as the result of seasonal illnesses that routinely spread in the community around this time of year – namely a fever, cough, or shortness of breath. These symptoms on their own are not worrisome and should not cause alarm. However, if students or staff who recently traveled to mainland China exhibit these symptoms, please take the following actions:

- Limit the person's exposure to other people.
 - Place the symptomatic individual in a room with door closed, if available.
- Instruct the person or their guardian to contact their healthcare provider. They should notify their healthcare provider of their symptoms and travel history *before* visiting their provider's office.
- Report any ill students, staff, or employees with a travel history to mainland China to the local health department or the UDOH at 1-888-EPI-UTAH (374-8824) **immediately**. Public health will coordinate with the school to determine next steps.

There are currently no cases of COVID-19 in Utah, and there are no restrictions on public gatherings. Students, staff, and employees should be reminded that part of good respiratory hygiene is staying home from school and events when they are sick.

Additionally, you should always encourage good hygiene among your students, staff, and employees, including regular hand washing and covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue or an elbow.

Special sanitizing processes beyond routine cleaning, including closing schools to clean every surface in the building are not necessary or recommended to slow the spread of respiratory illness. Follow standard procedures for routine cleaning and disinfecting.

More information about novel coronavirus can be found at health.utah.gov/coronavirus or at cdc.gov/coronavirus. I have also enclosed a flyer you can print or copy and display in Utah schools.

While the origin of this particular outbreak can be traced back to China, it would be grossly inappropriate, not to mention medically ineffective, to ostracize anyone from our communities or exclude anyone from our places of public gathering based on their race, nationality, or ethnicity.

We can all contribute to a healthy community, and we appreciate your willingness to help protect the public health in Utah. If you have concerns or questions, please call the Bureau of Epidemiology at 801-538-6191 or 1-888-EPI-UTAH (374-8824).

Sincerely,

Angela C. Dunn

Angela C. Dunn, MD, MPH
State Epidemiologist
Utah Department of Health