

STONINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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March 11, 2020

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff and Students:

Stonington Public Schools is taking the necessary precautions to protect the school community from the Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19). District administration has been receiving regular updates from the State Department of Education, CT Department of Public Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CT Association of School Superintendents (CAPSS) and through local collaborations with leaders from Ledge Light Health District.

Special care and attention are being paid to the cleaning, sanitizing, disinfecting with use of electrostatic foggers at all school and district facilities. Custodial staff will continue to clean surfaces that are frequently touched such as doorknobs, light switches, countertops, keyboards, desks and handrails. Shared supplies such as baskets of markers and physical education equipment are also being cleaned regularly. Additional hand soap and sanitizer are available to staff and students. The District will utilize CDC-recommended cleaning products that are labeled as hospital grade disinfectants. Information on these products can be found in their Technical Data and Safety Data Sheets which are available upon request. Furthermore, our bus company, First Student, has also increased their cleaning methodologies.

At this time, school closures in Connecticut have not been directed by Federal or State officials. The decision to close schools will be made by school district administration in coordination with and/or at the direction of local health officials. The following protocols are hereby implemented for Stonington Public Schools:

Effective Immediately:

- At this time, all school and district offices will remain open, in regular session, for students and staff.
- All enrichment activities/events (evening school concerts, plays, family engagement events, etc.) that are planned for groups of more than 100 people are cancelled beginning today, March 11th through April 20th.
- All field trips and travel are cancelled between March 11th and April 20th.
- All winter sports championship tournaments are cancelled. This announcement was made by the CIAC today.
- These restrictions will be reviewed prior to April 20th for possible extension.

If there is a confirmed case of COVID-19 within our school district:

- Should there be a need to close our schools (due to a confirmed case of COVID-19), all district schools will be closed for a two-week duration. Please begin to prepare alternative accommodations for your child in the event that a closure is warranted. The Stonington school community will be informed about the need for a school closing through our social media outlets, email, a live phone message, and letters posted on our district website. In addition, the district will keep the school community apprised of updates through regular communications as the situation may change.
- Should the district need to close, the days missed will be made up prior to June 30th.

What All Can Do To Assist:

- Wash hands thoroughly and often.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipes.

Please Communicate Health Concerns:

- If staff or students are experiencing illness symptoms (fever, cough, shortness of breath), please stay home and communicate these symptoms to your doctor/pediatrician and to the school nurse.
- If staff or students/families are traveling out of the state or country over the next 7 weeks, please communicate this information to respective school leaders.

Enclosed with this letter are some useful resources for families and staff to use regarding educating students, modeling healthy habits, and facts about COVID-19. We are hopeful that our school community is not affected by this illness. Thank you for your understanding and partnership as we work together through this challenge!

Sincerely,



Dr. Van Riley
Superintendent

VR/amd

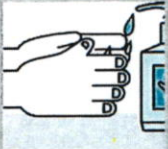
Enclosures

PREPARE!

DON'T PANIC over COVID-19



Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially before eating. If soap & water are not available, use hand sanitizers with a minimum of 60% alcohol. They are easy to carry.



Keep your hands away from your face. Germs can enter our bodies through our eyes, nose, and mouth.



Always be prepared with extra food and medication in case you cannot leave your home due to illness or disaster.



Clean surfaces with disinfectants that are labeled "*EPA Approved for Emerging Viral Pathogens or Coronavirus.*" It is unclear how long COVID-19 can live on surface but many viruses can live for days.



Please keep your germs to yourself. Stay home when ill. Make arrangements for child or eldercare if you work. Talk to your employer.



Stay informed through reputable sources such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Connecticut Department of Public Health or Ledge Light Health District.

Revised 3/9/2020

COVID-19 (2019 CORONAVIRUS DISEASE)

WHAT IS IT?	A respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in almost 70 locations internationally, including in the United States. The virus has been named "SARS-CoV-2" and the disease it causes has been named "coronavirus disease 2019" (abbreviated "COVID-19").
HOW DOES IT SPREAD?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infected person (with or without symptoms) coughing or sneezing within 6 feet of others. • Close personal contact such as shaking hands, touching an object or surface with the virus on it and then touching mouth, nose, or eyes before washing hands.
INCUBATION	Time from exposure to the virus until getting ill could be 2-14 days; average 5 days
SIGNS & SYMPTOMS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mild to severe illness and death especially noted in older people and people with underlying disease like heart, lung or diabetes. • Main symptoms: fever and cough, shortness of breath Maybe: headache, sore throat, general feeling of being unwell (myalgia or fatigue), diarrhea
TREATMENT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no specific antiviral treatment recommended at this time. • Supportive care if ill.
HOW IS IT DIAGNOSED?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swab of the nose and throat. • Criteria: People with fever and/or symptoms of acute respiratory illness who have had close contact with a laboratory-confirmed COVID-19 patient within 14 days of symptom onset, or a history of travel from affected geographic areas within 14 days of symptom onset.
PREVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wash your hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water isn't available, use a hand sanitizer that has a minimum of 60% alcohol. They are very effective and easy to carry. • Cover your cough and sneeze into a tissue or the crook of your elbow. Did you know that a sneeze can release 100,000 contagious germs into the air at speeds up to 100 miles per hour? • Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces with a disinfectant that is labeled to kill Emerging Viral Pathogens or Coronavirus • Keep your hands away from your face. Germs can enter our body through the eyes, nose and mouth. • Stay home when ill. Plan for child or elder care in case of illness. • Do not share cigarettes, pipes, cups, utensils or toothbrushes. • Avoid close contact. Don't shake hands.
MASKS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face masks do not protect. Should only be worn if sick to protect others. • There is a critical shortage of masks and gloves that are needed by medical personnel.
VACCINE	Currently there is no vaccine.

YALE NEW HAVEN SYSTEM COVID-19 HOTLINE 1-203-688-1700

Get the facts from reliable sources such as www.cdc.gov or www.llhd.org

Please note that the details surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak change daily Revised 3/8/20

February 29, 2020

Talking to Children About COVID-19 (Coronavirus) A Parent Resource

A new type of coronavirus, abbreviated COVID-19, is causing an outbreak of respiratory (lung) disease. It was first detected in China and has now been detected internationally. While the immediate health risk in the United States is low, it is important to plan for any possible outbreaks if the risk level increases in the future.

Concern over this new virus can make children and families anxious. While we don't know where and to what extent the disease may spread here in the United States, we do know that it is contagious, that the severity of illness can vary from individual to individual, and that there are steps we can take to prevent the spread of infection. Acknowledging some level of concern, without panicking, is appropriate and can result in taking actions that reduce the risk of illness. Helping children cope with anxiety requires providing accurate prevention information and facts without causing undue alarm.

It is very important to remember that children look to adults for guidance on how to react to stressful events. If parents seem overly worried, children's anxiety may rise. Parents should reassure children that health and school officials are working hard to ensure that people throughout the country stay healthy. However, children also need factual, age appropriate information about the potential seriousness of disease risk and concrete instruction about how to avoid infections and spread of disease. Teaching children positive preventive measures, talking with them about their fears, and giving them a sense of some control over their risk of infection can help reduce anxiety.

Specific Guidelines

Remain calm and reassuring.

- Children will react to and follow your verbal and nonverbal reactions.
- What you say and do about COVID-19, current prevention efforts, and related events can either increase or decrease your children's anxiety.
- If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
- Remind them that you and the adults at their school are there to keep them safe and healthy.
- Let your children talk about their feelings and help reframe their concerns into the appropriate perspective.

Make yourself available.

- Children may need extra attention from you and may want to talk about their concerns, fears, and questions.
- It is important that they know they have someone who will listen to them; make time for them.
- Tell them you love them and give them plenty of affection.

Avoid excessive blaming.

- When tensions are high, sometimes we try to blame someone.
- It is important to avoid stereotyping any one group of people as responsible for the virus.
- Bullying or negative comments made toward others should be stopped and reported to the school.
- Be aware of any comments that other adults are having around your family. You may have to explain what comments mean if they are different than the values that you have at home.

Monitor television viewing and social media.

- Limit television viewing or access to information on the Internet and through social media. Try to avoid watching or listening to information that might be upsetting when your children are present.
- Speak to your child about how many stories about COVID-19 on the Internet may be based on rumors and inaccurate information.
- Talk to your child about factual information of this disease—this can help reduce anxiety.
- Constantly watching updates on the status of COVID-19 can increase anxiety—avoid this.
- Be aware that developmentally inappropriate information (i.e., information designed for adults) can cause anxiety or confusion, particularly in young children.
- Engage your child in games or other interesting activities instead.

Maintain a normal routine to the extent possible.

- Keep to a regular schedule, as this can be reassuring and promotes physical health.
- Encourage your children to keep up with their schoolwork and extracurricular activities, but don't push them if they seem overwhelmed.

Be honest and accurate.

- In the absence of factual information, children often imagine situations far worse than reality.
- Don't ignore their concerns, but rather explain that at the present moment very few people in this country are sick with COVID-19.
- Children can be told this disease is thought to be spread between people who are in close contact with one another—when an infected person coughs or sneezes.
- It is also thought it can be spread when you touch an infected surface or object, which is why it is so important to protect yourself.
- For additional factual information contact your school nurse, ask your doctor, or check the <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html> website.

Know the symptoms of COVID-19.

- The CDC believes these symptoms appear in a few days after being exposed to someone with the disease or as long as 14 days after exposure:
 - Fever
 - Cough
 - Shortness for breath
- For some people the symptoms are like having a cold; for others they are quite severe or even life threatening. In either case it is important to check with your child's healthcare provider (or yours) and follow instructions about staying home or away from public spaces to prevent the spread of the virus.

Review and model basic hygiene and healthy lifestyle practices for protection.

- Encourage your child to practice every day good hygiene—simple steps to prevent spread of illness:
 - Wash hands multiple times a day for at least 20 seconds (singing Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star slowly takes about 20 seconds).
 - Cover their mouths with a tissue when they sneeze or cough and throw away the tissue immediately, or sneeze or cough into the bend of their elbow. Do not share food or drinks.

- Practice giving fist or elbow bumps instead of handshakes. Fewer germs are spread this way.
- Giving children guidance on what they can do to prevent infection gives them a greater sense of control over disease spread and will help to reduce their anxiety.
- Encourage your child to eat a balanced diet, get enough sleep, and exercise regularly; this will help them develop a strong immune system to fight off illness.

Discuss new rules or practices at school.

- Many schools already enforce illness prevention habits, including frequent hand washing or use of alcohol-based hand cleansers.
- Your school nurse or principal will send information home about any new rules or practices.
- Be sure to discuss this with your child.
- Contact your school nurse with any specific questions.

Communicate with your school.

- Let your school know if your child is sick and keep them home. Your school may ask if your child has a fever or not. This information will help the school to know why your child was kept home. If your child is diagnosed with COVID-19, let the school know so they can communicate with and get guidance from local health authorities.
- Talk to your school nurse, school psychologist, school counselor, or school social worker if your child is having difficulties as a result of anxiety or stress related to COVID-19. They can give guidance and support to your child at school.
- *Make sure to follow all instructions from your school.*

Take Time to Talk

You know your children best. Let their questions be your guide as to how much information to provide. However, don't avoid giving them the information that health experts identify as critical to ensuring your children's health. Be patient; children and youth do not always talk about their concerns readily. Watch for clues that they may want to talk, such as hovering around while you do the dishes or yard work. It is very typical for younger children to ask a few questions, return to playing, then come back to ask more questions.

When sharing information, it is important make sure to provide facts without promoting a high level of stress, remind children that adults are working to address this concern, and give children actions they can take to protect themselves.

Information is rapidly changing about this new virus—to have the most correct information stay informed by accessing <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>.

Keep Explanations Age Appropriate

- Early elementary school children need brief, simple information that should balance COVID-19 facts with appropriate reassurances that their schools and homes are safe and that adults are there to help keep them healthy and to take care of them if they do get sick. Give simple examples of the steps people take every day to stop germs and stay healthy, such as washing hands. Use language such as “adults are working hard to keep you safe.”
- Upper elementary and early middle school children will be more vocal in asking questions about whether they truly are safe and what will happen if COVID-19 comes to their school or community. They may need assistance separating reality from rumor and fantasy. Discuss efforts of school and

community leaders to prevent germs from spreading.

- Upper middle school and high school students are able to discuss the issue in a more in-depth (adult-like) fashion and can be referred directly to appropriate sources of COVID-19 facts. Provide honest, accurate, and factual information about the current status of COVID-19. Having such knowledge can help them feel a sense of control.

Suggested Points to Emphasize When Talking to Children

- Adults at home and school are taking care of your health and safety. If you have concerns, please talk to an adult you trust.
- Not everyone will get the coronavirus (COVID-19) disease. School and health officials are being especially careful to make sure as few people as possible get sick.
- It is important that all students treat each other with respect and not jump to conclusions about who may or may not have COVID-19.
- There are things you can do to stay healthy and avoid spreading the disease:
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Stay home when you are sick.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze into your elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
 - Wash hands often with soap and water (20 seconds).
 - If you don't have soap, use hand sanitizer (60–95% alcohol based).
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.

Additional Resources

Talking With Children: Tips for Caregivers, Parents, and Teachers During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Talking-With-Children-Tips-for-Caregivers-Parents-and-Teachers-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/SMA14-4886>

Coping With Stress During Infectious Disease Outbreaks, <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Coping-with-Stress-During-Infectious-Disease-Outbreaks/sma14-4885>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19), <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>

Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer Use at Home, at Play, and Out and About, <https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/pdf/hand-sanitizer-factsheet.pdf>

For more information related to schools and physical and mental health, visit www.nasponline.org and www.nasn.org.

Yale
NewHaven
Health

LLHD
Ledge Light Health District



COVID-19
CORONAVIRUS



HOTLINE
1-203-668-1700