



**Dear School Superintendent:**

Corona Virus (COVID-19) has dominated our news cycles in recent days. We learn daily of increasing numbers of individuals who have been infected. At this writing there are no confirmed cases in our community, but we do need to be prepared for any eventuality. The good news is that we have the best offense in each and every one of our homes, schools, and place of business: SOAP AND WATER. Washing your hands vigorously with soap and water is the best means of protecting ourselves and others against any infectious disease. However, there is other important information that you, as school administrators and educators, should be aware of.

As a system, Excelsa Health has a number of response mechanisms in place. In addition to our standard infectious disease protocols, we are following Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines and have instituted a number of measures to identify and screen patients with potential COVID-19. We would like to suggest that you use these resources as well that have been customized for the school setting. The recommendations are rapidly changing and we would encourage you to identify a point person in your district who could visit the site on a daily basis in order to identify any new information. Here is a link:

<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus%20Education.aspx>

In addition, here are some general facts about COVID-19:

Similar to other respiratory illnesses like influenza, coronavirus generally spreads from an infected person to others via:

- droplet by coughing and sneezing
- close personal contact (within about six feet), such as touching or shaking hands
- touching an object or surface with the virus on it, then touching your mouth, nose or eyes before washing your hand
- There is currently no vaccine available that would prevent COVID-19 infection
- Treatment for COVID-19 infection is supportive. There is no specific anti-viral treatment.

The CDC notes that the risk of mortality from COVID-19 is low at this time. Vulnerable populations in our community are currently at higher risk for mortality from influenza due to the prevalence of this infection. That is why it is so important



to follow the following preventive actions to help prevent the spread of ANY respiratory disease:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth
- Stay home from work or school when you are sick. Individuals with febrile illnesses should be fever free for 24 hours WITHOUT the use of fever medicines before resuming regular activities or attending work/school. We must each monitor ourselves in order to protect those around us from illness.
- If you are elderly or have chronic conditions that either predispose you to infectious diseases OR could result in more severe illness during an infection, you should limit your exposure to large gatherings where individuals with illness may be present.
- 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 wipe
- The CDC does NOT recommend that people who are well wear a facemask to protect themselves from respiratory diseases, including COVID-19.
- Facemasks should be used by people who show symptoms of COVID-19 to help prevent the spread of the disease to others.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, especially after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after blowing your nose, coughing or sneezing.
- If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol. Always wash hands with soap and water if hands are visibly dirty.

It is the mission of Excelsa Health to improve the health and well-being of every life we touch. That is why it is important that you understand that you can depend on us as a trusted source of information for your students, and your staff. Our physicians, nurses, and staff are committed to providing your district with the best resources possible. Specific questions related to the Department of Health plan should be addressed to the PA Department of Health at 724-832-5315. Our Infection Prevention and Control Staff are also available 24/7/365 to provide “just in time” information if you are unable to reach the DOH. These individuals can be reached by calling the Excelsa Health Operator at 724-832-4000.

To your good health,

**Carol J. Fox, MD, Senior Vice-President and Chief Medical Officer, Excelsa Health**