

February 28, 2020

Dear Parents/Guardians;

We understand that the disease caused by the novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, is causing much concern in our community and across the world. Pima County Health Department (PCHD) is working to give you the most up to date information on this rapidly evolving situation. This is a brief update on what is happening – for more information, please visit [www.pima.gov/CoV](http://www.pima.gov/CoV).

### **WHAT IS KNOWN**

- The virus causing COVID-19 is a new coronavirus that has not been previously identified in humans and causes a respiratory illness ranging from a mild cold-like illness to severe pneumonia.
- Most (81%) of people, including children, diagnosed with COVID-19 in China had mild symptoms.
- Similar to the flu, the people who are most likely to have severe illness or complications from COVID-19 are older individuals (over 60 years old) and those with other medical conditions like heart and lung disease or diabetes.
- There is no vaccine currently available for COVID-19, but the National Institutes of Health is evaluating treatments and working towards a vaccine.
- Currently, there are NO confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Pima County. However, it is likely there be many more cases throughout the country. PCHD is preparing for when/if this happens.

### **HOW THE VIRUS SPREADS**

- We believe COVID-19 spreads the same way the common cold or flu spreads—through respiratory droplets that are produced when someone coughs or sneezes.
- People who are most at risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 are those who have been in close contact (within about 6 feet) with someone who has the disease.
- Those who have COVID-19 are thought to be most contagious when they are most symptomatic (the sickest).
- Some spread of the virus might be possible before a person has symptoms.

### **WHAT YOU CAN DO NOW**

- Keep children home if they are sick.
  - Students (and parents/guardians) who are ill, especially with acute respiratory symptoms (not allergies or chronic conditions), should stay home.
- Teach your children to always cover their cough and sneezes with their elbow or a tissue and then throw that tissue in the trash.

- Remind children to wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds after they touch their face, use the restroom, and before they eat. Use hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- Tell children to avoid touching their face since that is how germs get into the body.
- Clean frequently touched surfaces and objects, including (but not limited to): door handles, light switches, faucet handles, toilet handles, refrigerator doors, phones, remote controls, etc.
  - Everyday household disinfectants are fine for this.
- If community spread occurs:
  - Designate a caregiver, such as a family member or neighbor, for sick child(ren) if you can't stay home.
  - Know your child's school plan to communicate with you when needed, such as robocalls, email, or checking their website.
  - Prepare an emergency kit for 3 days worth of non-perishable food, bottled water, prescription medicines, medical supplies, and other essential items. Visit [Ready.gov](https://www.ready.gov) for the full check list.

Because most people with COVID-19 have mild disease, the likelihood that PCHD will recommend closing schools is extremely low, but not zero. In the highly unlikely event that PCHD has to shut down your child's school due to a COVID-19 outbreak, it is always important for parents/guardians to have a plan for who will take care of your child.

PCHD staff are working day and night to monitor this evolving situation and will continue to provide new information to the community as things change. Please contact your school leadership or healthcare provider should you have additional questions.

More information can be found on our Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/pimacountyhealthdepartment](https://www.facebook.com/pimacountyhealthdepartment), our Twitter at [www.Twitter.com/pchd](https://www.Twitter.com/pchd), and our website at [www.pima.gov/CoV](https://www.pima.gov/CoV).

Sincerely,



Bob England, M.D., M.P.H.  
Interim Director  
Pima County Health Department



Francisco Garcia, M.D., M.P.H.  
Deputy County Administrator &  
Chief Medical Officer Pima  
County