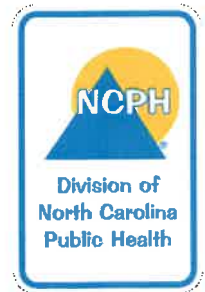




Halifax County Public Health System

*Health Department • WIC
Environmental Health • Animal Control
Post Office Box 10
19 North Dobbs Street
Halifax, North Carolina, 27839
Phone: (252) 583-5021 Fax: (252) 583-2975*

***Mr. Bruce L. Robistow, MPH
Health Director***



Attention School Administrator:

The Halifax County Public Health System continues to see guidance from our state and others that it is not necessary to close schools preemptively or even with a small number of cases in community. It is important for schools to limit potential spread of COVID-19 because infected students may still come into contact with those who are at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness outside the school setting. For some reason we do not yet understand about this virus, children are not affected as badly and our concern at the moment is exposing them to our more vulnerable populations (like their grandparents) if they were not in school. We absolutely support your decision to cancel activities outside of school including sports activities and field trips.

Guidance for Schools

If a case of COVID-19 is diagnosed at a school, Halifax County Public Health System will work with the relevant school and district to determine actions to take, including potential closure of the school.

At this moment, Halifax County Public Health System is not recommending school closures at this time because children have not been shown to be at high risk for serious cases of COVID-19. Additionally, closing schools would put a strain on our workforce, including healthcare and emergency workers who are essential to the COVID-19 response. As much as possible, children should be allowed to carry on with their education and normal activities. Halifax County Public Health System respects individual school districts' decisions about closures or postponement of activities.

We are asking schools to take precautions to avoid the spread of COVID-19. Schools should:

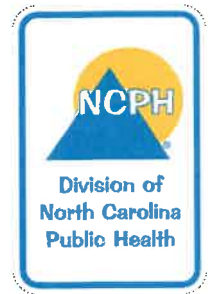
- Implement social distancing measures.
- Reduce the frequency of large gatherings (e.g., assemblies), and limit the number of attendees per gathering.
- Alter schedules to reduce mixing (e.g., stagger recess, entry/dismissal times)
- Limit inter-school interactions
- Consider distance learning and/or e-learning in some settings
- Consider regular health checks (e.g., temperature and respiratory symptom screening) of students, staff, and visitors (if feasible).
- Short-term dismissals for school and extracurricular activities as needed (e.g., if cases are identified among staff/students) for cleaning and contact tracing.



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- Students at increased risk of severe illness should consider implementing individual plans for distance learning and/or e-learning.
- Prioritize protective actions for students, staff, and visitors who are at higher risk of severe illness.

Some children have underlying health conditions, such as weakened immune systems, that put them at higher risk for severe COVID-19 illness. Caregivers of children with underlying health conditions should consult with healthcare providers about whether their children should stay home.

For people who are sick:

- Stay home when you are sick.
- Do not go out in public when you are sick.
- If you are ill in any way, call your doctor's office first before going in.
- Do not go to the emergency room unless you are experiencing a medical emergency. Emergency rooms need to be able to serve those with the most critical needs.
- If you have symptoms like cough, fever, or other respiratory problems, stay home and self-isolate until you have contacted a healthcare professional.

Please see link below for a decision tree for discussion. Again, do what is best for you and your families and staff – and know that our guidance is to hold off for now.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/considerations-for-school-closure.pdf> [cdc.gov]

We are also in communication with education officials at the state level and will keep you apprised of any additional communication resources or changes to guidance.

Sincerely,

Bruce Robistow, MPH
Health Director
252-583-5021 ext 6300 (office)
252-532-4691 (cell)