

# **Bellevue Community School District**

## **Pandemic or Infectious Disease Plan**

Schools tend to be affected by infectious disease outbreaks more than other settings. Children easily transmit illnesses to one another as a result of their close proximity, their inefficiency at containing respiratory droplets and their ineffective hand washing. As a school district, we play an important role in protecting the health of our students and staff from contagious diseases.

This pandemic or infectious disease plan provides guidance for reducing illness at school on a regular basis as well as procedures during infectious disease outbreaks and pandemic periods.

The plan includes the following:

1. Strategies to prevent and reduce the spread of infectious diseases at our schools.
2. Procedures for canceling school due to an infectious disease outbreak.
3. Considerations for reopening schools.

Notification of confirmed pandemic or infectious disease threats to the district will come from Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) or the Jackson County Public Health (JCPH).

- IDPH/JCPH Disease Prevention Specialists will notify the Bellevue Community School District (BCSD) Superintendent and/or School Nurse in the event that the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) declares a pandemic event or an infectious disease threat to the district.
  - BCSD Superintendent and the School Nurse will receive guidance from IDPH/JCPH Disease Prevention Specialists regarding parent communication.
- The Superintendent will work with the School Nurse and the administration on communication to parents/guardians, students, and staff.
- The Superintendent will initiate the BCSD Pandemic or Infectious Disease Plan.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

### **Strategies to Prevent & Reduce the Spread of Infectious Diseases.....Pages 3-5**

- How Germs Spread
- Disease Prevention & Education
- Hand Washing and Respiratory Education Websites
- Illness/Disease Monitoring & Tracking
- Disinfection & Cleaning Procedures
- Buses
- Food Service Protocols
- Social Distancing
- Where to Get Information

### **Cancelling School.....Page 6**

- Legal Authorities for Cancellation of School
- Communicating with Stakeholders
- Continuity of Operations Plan
- Schools as Alternative Care Sites
- Free & Reduced Meals
- Learning at Home

### **Reopening Schools.....Page 7**

- Disinfection
- Personnel
- Mental Health Issues
- Making up School Days

## **STRATEGIES TO PREVENT AND REDUCE THE SPREAD OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES**

**How Germs Spread:** Illnesses such as the flu (influenza), Norovirus (sudden and violent nausea, vomiting and diarrhea), and colds are caused by viruses that infect the nose, throat, lungs and gastrointestinal tract. Flu and cold viruses usually spread from person to person when an infected person coughs or sneezes and the virus is inhaled by another person. Norovirus is spread by infected persons passing germs through food or ineffective hand washing. Germs are also spread by droplets when a person touches something that is contaminated with a virus and then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. The length of time germs can live on certain surfaces depends on the virus.

**Disease Prevention & Education:** To help prevent the spread of any infectious disease, schools have an opportunity to educate students, staff, and the community on social etiquette, good health and hygiene habits, and disease prevention. BCSD will provide education and reminders on handwashing, coughing, and sneezing any time there is a suspected outbreak and during the school year as requested by staff. BCSD will have current illness/disease prevention information on the district website. During times of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, the school district will coordinate with IDPH/JCPH to address the outbreak.

Our basic educational message is:

1. Cover your cough
2. Wash your hands often
3. Stay home if you're sick
4. Wear appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment) as recommended by IDPH/JCPH

**1. Cover Your Cough:** Teach students coughing and sneezing etiquette in classrooms and hang instructional posters in the school buildings. Have an ample supply of tissues available in each classroom and school area.

- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue when you cough or sneeze.
- Cough or sneeze into your upper sleeve, not your hands.
- Wash your hands after you cough or sneeze, or use hand sanitizer.

**2. Wash Your Hands Often:** Handwashing with soap and warm water is the best option. Hand sanitizers can be effective when there is no access to water, they are most effective if they have at least 60% alcohol in them. Staff are encouraged to provide time and opportunity each day for students to practice washing their hands with soap and water upon arrival at school, after coughing and/or sneezing in hands, at the beginning of the lunch line before eating, after bathroom use, and after recess.

- Wet hands with water, apply soap and scrub hands together for at least 20 seconds.
- Thoroughly rinse under warm, running water.
- Dry hands completely with a paper towel. Use a paper towel to turn off faucet handles and open restroom doors. If there are air dryers in the restrooms, rub hands vigorously together under the dryer until completely dry.
- **Handwashing and Respiratory Etiquette Websites:**
  - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
<https://www.cdc.gov/handwashing/when-how-handwashing.html>
  - Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH)  
[https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/Files/AntibioticResistance/tab2\\_handwashing.pdf](https://idph.iowa.gov/Portals/1/Files/AntibioticResistance/tab2_handwashing.pdf)
  - Mayo Clinic  
<https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/adult-health/in-depth/hand-washing/art-20046253>
  - National Science Foundation (NSF) Scrub Club  
<https://www.scrubclub.org/index.php>

**3. Stay Home if You're Sick:** A primary strategy against the spread of illness is for sick people to stay home from school. This includes students, staff and volunteers. In times of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, sick leave policies for staff and students will be reviewed, modified (if needed), clearly communicated, and consistently enforced.

**4. Wear Appropriate PPE (Personal Protective Equipment):** When working with students with suspected infectious disease, staff will wear PPE as recommended by IDPH/JCPH.

**Illness/Disease Monitoring & Tracking:** During times of a potential infectious disease outbreak, building secretaries will inform the school nurse of increased absenteeism due to illness. The school nurse will report increased absenteeism to the BCSD building principals and superintendent. If a building has 10% or more of their total enrollment absent due to illness, the building nurse will report it to the Iowa Department of Public Health through its online reporting system (<https://redcap.idph.state.ia.us/surveys/?s=C4XNALH3R9>). The School Nurse will implement a surveillance system to detect unusual rates of illness in schools. School nurses and building secretaries will monitor illnesses daily, track illness trends, and report to the building principals and superintendent. The School Nurse will monitor absentee rates, illness trends/patterns, and report to IDPH/JCPH as necessary.

Staff are trained to be alert to children who are ill. Examples of symptoms include fever, frequent cough and/or sneezing, sore throat, and vomiting/diarrhea. Symptomatic students need to be sent to the health office for evaluation.

During periods of suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks.

- School nurses should protect themselves by wearing appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) when deemed necessary by IDPH/JCPH.
- Students who have a cough/sneezing with a fever may stay in the nurse's office and will be reasonably distanced from healthy students until parents arrive. Having an ill person distanced can help to slow or prevent the spread of disease.

**Disinfection & Cleaning Procedures:** Keep commonly touched surfaces such as stairway railings, door handles, computer keyboards, bathroom faucets and surfaces, drinking fountains, telephones, and elevator buttons clean by wiping down with a disinfectant. During an infectious disease outbreak, consideration will be given to increasing the frequency of cleaning these commonly touched surfaces and areas based on the nature of the disease. In addition, we will consult with IDPH/JCPH for guidance on any necessary operational procedures that need to be enacted (i.e. changing HVAC filters, specialized disinfectants to use, closing rooms for a period of time, proper ventilation, etc.). When an employee or student with a suspected infectious disease is identified and has left the building, it is important that their work area, along with any other known places they have been, are thoroughly cleaned and disinfected. Clean the surface to remove dirt and soil with a cleaning agent, if needed, and disinfect following manufacturers' recommendations, paying particular attention to dwell time requirements. The person cleaning and disinfecting (usually a custodian) should wear appropriate PPE according to IDPH/JCPH recommendation. Hands must be washed or sanitized at the completion of the procedure. During times of a specifically known or suspected disease outbreak, the school district will consult with IDPH/JCPH for guidance.

**Buses:** BCSD operates its school buses regularly, and school buses are cleaned by the drivers on a regular basis during the normal school year. However, during periods of suspected or confirmed infectious disease outbreak, consideration will be given to increasing the frequency of cleaning schedules based on the nature and spread of the disease and guidance from our Public Health Department. Additional airflow can be forced on the buses by opening selected windows and the top hatches on the buses if outside temperatures can allow cooler air to flow through the buses without causing additional harm.

**Nutrition Services Food Safety/Sanitation Protocols:** The BCSD Nutrition Services Department follows safe food handling and storage practices from receiving through meal service. Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Point (HACCP) principles are followed in each step of the food preparation process. Nutrition staff receive training upon hire and at least three times a year which includes education on good personal hygiene and proper food handling practices. Staff are not allowed to come to work if they have a fever, diarrhea, jaundice, or vomiting. During periods of suspected or confirmed infectious disease outbreak, modifications will be considered to services based on the severity and nature of the outbreak. This could include discontinuing the use of self-serve salad bars, serving sack lunches instead of cafeteria-style lunches, and having more stringent sick employee policies. Nutrition Service Departments will follow guidance from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

**Social Distancing:** During suspected or identified infectious disease outbreaks, several social distancing measures can be taken to reduce the spread of an infectious disease. Discourage handshaking. Discourage the sharing of drinks or food. Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Avoid face-to-face meetings, however, if unavoidable, maintain a distance between individuals as determined by IDPH/JCPH. Cancel or postpone non-essential meetings, gatherings, assemblies, field trips, workshops, or training as deemed necessary by the superintendent in collaboration with IDPH/JCPH. Consider having flexible hours and attendance policies to maintain social distancing and reduce illness in district office facilities.

**Where to Get Information:** If an infectious disease outbreak or pandemic occurs, having accurate and reliable information will be critical. Here are several websites to consult.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
<https://www.cdc.gov/>

World Health Organization (WHO)  
<https://www.who.int/>

Iowa Department of Public Health  
<https://www.idph.iowa.gov/>

U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (HHS)  
<https://www.hhs.gov/>

## CANCELLING SCHOOL DUE TO AN INFECTIOUS DISEASE OUTBREAK

BCSD will collaborate with IDPH/JCPH to monitor disease outbreaks in our schools and to determine if and when school should be canceled. The information provided by IDPH/JCPH will also guide BCSD decisions on the length of time for a school closure and the extent of the closure (single school closure, neighboring schools, partial district, entire district, etc.), taking into consideration the mixing of students/staff across schools, geographic proximity, outbreaks at neighboring school districts, etc.

**Legal Authorities for Cancellation of School:** The BCSD Superintendent has the authority to cancel classes when it is deemed necessary for the health and safety of students and staff. If school is canceled due to an infectious disease outbreak, all other school-related gatherings (athletic events, concerts, after school activities, field trips, etc.) will also be canceled. In some cases, non-academic events may be canceled even if classes are not.

**Communicating with Stakeholders during an Infectious Disease Outbreak:** BCSD will attempt to provide accurate, consistent, and timely communication with staff, students, and parents. We will coordinate with IDPH/JCPH to disseminate critical information from the health department, to develop and deliver common health messages and educational materials to families as information is received.

Information will be disseminated via our normal emergency mass communication methods, including communicating through the JMC Student Management System, social media, and other media communications.

**Continuity of Operations Plan:** Certain essential district-level functions will need to continue even during a school closure situation. Essential services may include:

- Payroll, Accounts Payable
- Communications, Technology (website, press releases, learning at home resources, etc.)
- Facilities Coordination
- Emergency Operations Center (planning for the reopening of schools)

Identified essential personnel who will be needed to carry out essential services and determine if those services can be accomplished at home (by computer, through emails, conference calls, using Skype, etc.) or by staggering work schedules and locations and using social distancing measures will be determined by the Superintendent. Essential personnel who report to work during a school closure should take precautions; Social distancing, and/or wear PPE as recommended by JCPH.

**Learning at Home:** To help students stay educationally engaged while classes are canceled, BCSD may provide a variety of resources for students to utilize both online and in other manners. While not mandatory, we encourage parents and students to utilize these resources which would be provided in the event of a school cancellation.

**Staff Leave:** In the event of school closures, information will be communicated to employees regarding the appropriate type of leave to be used.

## REOPENING SCHOOLS

Our primary objective in the recovery phase is to restore the learning environment as soon as possible. Issues to consider include determining if schools need disinfection measures before reopening, staffing levels, and grief/mental health issues. The Superintendent's office may also need to develop a plan for students/staff to make up for lost school days.

As the district resumes normal operation, it will remain in contact with IDPH/JCPH regarding disease surveillance. An infectious disease outbreak often comes in waves and the response and recovery process may be repeated several times.

**Disinfection:** Disinfection needs will depend primarily on the severity, type, and duration of the pandemic. Viruses can live an extended time outside the human body on nonporous surfaces such as plastic, metal or wood (depending on the virus). Guidance will be obtained from IDPH/JCPH regarding our cleaning policies and practices.

**Personnel:** If there are multiple staff absences due to an infectious disease outbreak, a plan will be formulated to continue instructional programs and operations within the district. District officials will also coordinate with the Superintendent regarding staffing abilities for bus drivers.

**Mental health issues:** Depending on the severity of the outbreak, we will use or modify our Emergency Response protocols and/or collaborate with local mental health partners to assist with providing students and staff with the appropriate support.

**Making up school days:** The Superintendent's office will collaborate with the Iowa Department of Education, the IDPH/JCPH, and local union groups to develop a plan for making up lost school days, if needed.