

Parent Guide: Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) in K-12 Schools

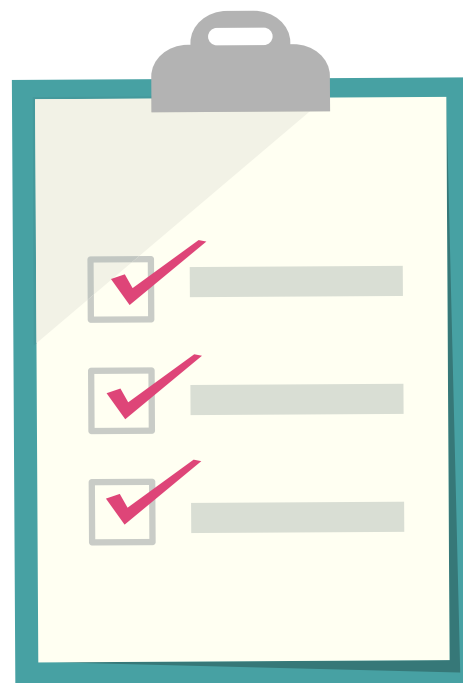
Background

About COVID-19

Along with many areas around the world, Utah is experiencing an expanding outbreak of respiratory illness caused by a novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This virus can spread from person-to-person and the number of detected cases is growing. The resources in this guide are intended to help parents, guardians, and families understand the school's role during a closure, commitments to students, and what making days up at the end of the school year looks like.

State vs. Local Authority

The Utah State Board of Education (USBE) is the state education agency charged with supporting Utah's **1,113** public schools. In Utah, local schools have a great amount of decision-making authority over how their schools operate. The state often lays the foundation, and then provides districts with flexibility to meet the needs of their unique communities. The decision to close schools is regularly made by local superintendents in response to weather and other events in order to maintain the health and safety of students and staff. During a health-related outbreak, schools must close if directed to by their local health officer. Local superintendents are advised to follow the expert advice and direction of public health officials in their local communities. During this health outbreak, parents and families should look to their superintendent, local health officer, and the state Department of Health for the most current and accurate information.



Expectations of Schools

Currently, the state expects schools to be:

1. Communicating regularly with students, families, staff, and the larger school community.
2. Practicing routine cleaning and disinfecting procedures of commonly touched surfaces.
3. Maintaining an open line of communication with their local public health officer.
4. Intentionally and persistently combatting stigma through information sharing. COVID-19 is not at all connected to race, ethnicity, or nationality.
5. Actively engaging in contingency planning for the possibility of extended school closures.

There are other expectations and considerations from USBE as this situation unfolds. These are outlined in more detail on the pages that follow.

Make-up Days for School Closures

If a school closes in response to the COVID-19 outbreak, they should make every effort to make up missed time, including using scheduled vacation days and planned school closure days. Schools will be expected to make up as much time as they can, using those previously scheduled closure days. For any missed time, USBE will grant schools with emergency waivers and allow them to end the school year.



Please note, it is USBE's expectation that schools will maintain their graduation timelines.

Special Education

If a school closes, the school will remain responsible for the free appropriate public education (FAPE) of its students eligible for special education services with an individualized education program (IEP). Schools should be communicating with parents and guardians prior to, during, and after a school closure regarding their child's IEP services. After an extended closure, schools are responsible for reviewing how the closure impacted the delivery of special education and related services to students eligible for special education services. Please note, if a school closure causes educational services for all students to pause within a school or district, then the school/district is generally not required to provide services to the affected students eligible for special education services during that same period of time.



Distance Learning

Schools may be in a position to continue teaching using distance learning methods; however, equity is a critical consideration. It is important to note that if educational services are being delivered to students in any form, in order for the school to remain open, those services must be provided to all students, including students who don't have access to technology at home and students receiving special education services.

Provide equitable solutions for distance learning

Other Considerations

School Meals

Continuity of food services, especially for students experiencing poverty, is an important factor that USBE expects schools to consider before deciding to close. School meals are largely paid for using federal funds, and there are restrictions attached that the state cannot control. USBE is working closely with schools regarding options for serving meals. Check your school's communication channels for information regarding meal availability.

Bullying and Harrasment

COVID-19 is not at all connected to race, ethnicity, or nationality. School staff should be mindful that bullying, intimidation, or harassment of students based on actual or perceived race, color, national origin, or disability (including the actual disability of being infected with COVID-19 or perception of being infected) may result in a violation of state and federal civil rights laws. Schools must take immediate and appropriate action to investigate what occurred when responding to reports of bullying or harassment. If parents and families believe their child has experienced bullying, harassment, or intimidation related to the COVID-19 outbreak, they should contact their school's designated civil rights compliance coordinator.

Notifications

If schools are experiencing closures, it is USBE's expectation that they follow their standard procedure for notifying parents and guardians. This includes, but is not limited to, calls, emails, text messages, and contacting local news stations. If parents and families are not hearing from their schools during a closure, they should get in touch with their school principal or superintendent.

Testing

Should the need arise, USBE will work with schools on alternate scheduling or adjustments related to state tests scheduled to take place in the spring.

More Information

The best place to find accurate, up-to-date information is the state website: **Coronavirus.Utah.Gov**.

If you have questions about what is happening in Utah, how the virus is spread, and what to do if you have symptoms, please call **888-EPI-UTAH (374-8824)**.

In addition, copies of USBE's guidance and resources related to COVID-19 are available on the USBE website, **schools.utah.gov/coronavirus**.