



Department of Public Health

Monroe County, New York

Adam J. Bello
County Executive

Michael D. Mendoza, MD, MPH, MS
Commissioner of Public Health

January 29, 2020

Dear School Superintendents and Nurses,

In light of growing concern regarding the outbreak of a new Coronavirus (2019-nCoV) in China, I write to share information that I hope you will find useful in managing questions you may receive from parents, students, and staff.

The immediate health risk from 2019-nCoV to the U.S. and to our area is considered to be low at this time. Although the number of confirmed cases of this respiratory illness worldwide is growing, there are currently 5 confirmed cases in the US and none in Monroe County. This situation is evolving rapidly and I have been in close contact with the NYS Department of Health and our local partners to ensure that we have the latest information and that we are prepared in the event that our area is impacted directly by this outbreak.

At the same time, there is great uncertainty about this virus and I applaud the desire to have more information and to take precautions. Based on our current knowledge, there is no need to take special precautions for students who have no symptoms, regardless of travel history. I can appreciate the good intentions of many who have inquired about asking students with recent travel to affected areas to remain home, but there is no need to take that level of precaution at this time. I will update you if there are any changes in these recommendations.

All local health care institutions have been directed to contact my office immediately about individuals who they believe may be at risk for 2019-nCoV. Our staff reviews all of these cases and we will grant approval for confirmation testing of suspected cases if needed. Because no one locally has met the current criteria for being considered a suspected case, we have not needed to authorize testing. We identify a suspected case when there are symptoms of fever, cough, or shortness of breath/trouble breathing AND either a history of travel to China within the preceding 14 days or close contact with a person who is under investigation for 2019-nCoV. In the event that we confirm an infection locally, we will inform the public and conduct our usual process of identifying contacts. If a school is among the groups at risk we will reach out to you directly.

No doubt you have seen the impacts of influenza and the common cold in your schools. Please continue to encourage using a tissue or one's elbow to cover coughs and sneezes and frequent hand washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds. These steps have been shown to reduce the transmission of most respiratory infections including 2019-nCoV. Influenza continues to circulate at high levels and we strongly recommend that all staff and students receive the flu vaccine.

As always, if you have questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact my office.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Mendoza, MD, MPH, MS, FAAFP
Commissioner of Public Health