

Winnebago Public Schools

Post Office Box KK, 202 Osborne Street

Winnebago, Nebraska 68071

"Learners Today... Leaders Tomorrow"

March 17, 2020

Dear Winnebago Public Schools Community:

I am writing to you because we value the health and well-being of our students, staff and families. We work throughout the year to promote healthy schools. Safety is always our priority. I am sending out updated Information and Guidance from the Northeast Nebraska Public Health Department regarding the COVID-19 Disease.

Dan Fehringer, Superintendent

RE: New Guidance to Help Slow the Spread of the New Coronavirus that causes COVID-19 Disease

Please read the following guidance from public health and feel free to use these as talking points or used in a letter from your school. If you have needs for information other than this communication, please let me know.

Northeast Nebraska Public Health Department (NNPHD) is working closely with ESU #1, the schools in the NNPHD health district and other local health departments to slow down any spread of this new coronavirus. I have heard people question why we need to take these measures that we don't always understand; I have many answers to that and here are a few:

1. This virus is most concerning to Sr. Citizens and people who already have health problems. Think about the people you love, we probably all have someone close to us who fits into these categories. Let's all work together to protect the people we love.
2. Our country and our area already have a shortage of healthcare providers. By slowing the spread of this virus, we can all work together to not overwhelm our healthcare system with seriously ill people. If we happen to spread the virus to healthcare workers in our community, this also stresses the local healthcare system.
3. This is a new virus, there is much we still don't know about it, but we keep learning more every day. It's important to stay updated on the facts from only reliable sources such as www.cdc.gov. Remember, facts not fear.

There are many basic things you can do to help stop the spread of the virus:

1. Avoid close contact with people who are sick and stay home if you are sick.
2. Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water aren't available, use an alcohol-based sanitizer.
3. Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
4. Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze then throw the tissue in the trash.
5. Clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched often.

People who are at a higher risk for getting very sick from the virus should take extra steps to keep themselves safe and healthy, such as:

- Stock up on supplies, including extra necessary medications.
- Keep space between yourself and others.
- When you go out in public, keep away from others who are sick, limit close contact and wash your hands often.
- Avoid crowds as much as possible.
- Avoid cruise travel and non-essential air travel.
- If there is a COVID-19 outbreak in your community, stay home as much as possible to further reduce your risk of being exposed.

The Governor and other state agency leaders have recently announced specific guidance for schools and communities about how to prepare for and what to expect when there is a community acquired case of COVID-19 in our area. **An important measure to take now** is to close schools for at least two weeks to decrease any opportunity of potential of spread. Schools can choose to close longer if their board decides that will be beneficial to the situation in their community. NNPHD recognizes the seriousness of this situation and is supportive of any school district's decision to remain closed if needed.

There is now one case of community acquired COVID-19 in Omaha, Nebraska. It is only a matter of time before we see more community acquired cases in Nebraska. You will start to see changes in the way events and public gatherings occur. The governor announced today, that there is to be no more than 50 people at public events and gatherings. This could change quickly as the situation changes. This is a time for us to get creative and work together to determine how we can keep our families and communities safe and healthy!

New travel health notices have been implemented. All travelers coming to your community from anywhere should take the following precautions to avoid spreading the virus:

1. Limit any unnecessary public interactions, practice strict social distancing (at least 6 feet away from other people for less than 10 minutes), and self-monitor for symptoms.
2. IF a traveler develops fever or respiratory illness, they need to IMMEDIATELY stay home and away from others and report to their healthcare provider or the local health department (402-375-2200 for NNPHD - Cedar, Dixon, Thurston and Wayne Counties.)

For travelers who have traveled from higher risk areas such as California, Washington State, New York City, ski resorts in Colorado (including Eagle, Summit, Pitkin, and Gunnison Counties), additional precautions should be taken, including:

1. Stay home and away from others for 14 days from the time you traveled,
2. Immediately report any symptoms that would suggest COVID-19 infection (fever of 100.4 or greater, cough, and/or trouble breathing) to their health care provider, and
3. If people have concerns about being able to complete the 14-day self-quarantine they should talk with their local health department.

Because these travel advisories are constantly changing, travelers need to be responsible to check the publicly reported COVID-19 disease burden in the areas to which they have travelled by looking at the local and state public health department websites and public media websites for the places they are or have traveled.

Please watch for further updates about the coronavirus situation and what is happening in Nebraska to try to prevent further infections. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has set up a coronavirus (COVID-19) information line that will allow residents to get answers to general questions and receive information on resources available. That number is (402) 552-6645; hours of operation are 8 a.m.-8 p.m. CST, 7 days a week. You can also visit www.cdc.gov for reliable information.

Sincerely,
Julie Rother, BSN, RN, CPH,
Health Director