

Decorah Community School District
COVID-19 Update
March 13, 2020



Good Afternoon,

At the time of writing the message to K-12 schools from the Iowa Departments of Public Health and Education continues to be to keep schools open and operating under the guidance we have been using all week. Governor Reynolds will be holding a press conference at 4:30 pm this afternoon. We will take in any new information shared during this press conference, along with any new guidance from the Departments of Public Health and Education, and develop our plans for next week. We will continue to communicate with families, students, and staff as we receive new information.

I also want to address an issue that has been brought to me several times in the past few days. I have received a number of calls and emails asking for advice and guidance on how to handle situations of families or staff returning from recent travel, or if people should cancel pending travel plans. My best recommendations are to stay current with travel related information from Iowa Public Health, and the U.S. Center for Disease Control. If you have specific questions, you should contact Winneshiek Public Health, your family doctor, or you can also call 211 for COVID-19 related questions.

We have been, and will continue to work with any family, student, or staff person in coordination with Winneshiek County Public Health, or a family doctor to understand potential travel related COVID-19 risks. Below you will find a summary of current travel-related information.

Before Travel

Most COVID-19 cases are associated with travel to or from China, person-to-person spread is now being reported in other places, including Iran, Italy, Japan and South Korea. For the general public, who are unlikely to be exposed to the virus at this time, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is low.

Iowa Department of Public Health is asking Iowans returning from a country where novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is spreading to voluntarily self-isolate for 14 days following their return. Areas in this travel notice currently include: Italy, Japan and South Korea. This is a rapidly evolving health situation, please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s website for the most up-to-date travel information.

At this present time, the CDC does not have any guidance on restricting travel in the United States. Again, this is current information and may change when you return from your trip. If you have questions regarding travel, please call your local health department.

During Travel

Promote and practice personal protective measures and illness prevention strategies to slow the spread of viruses. The best way to prevent ANY illness is to avoid being exposed to a virus. There are simple everyday preventive actions to help prevent the spread of respiratory viruses including:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Cover your cough or sneeze, preferably with a tissue, then dispose of the tissue in the trash and wash hands.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

It is vital to protect the most vulnerable individuals during the COVID-19 pandemic. If you have chronic conditions such as lung disease, heart disease, diabetes, cancer or a weakened immune system, avoid unnecessary gatherings and events. If you have family or friends who have one of these conditions, do not visit them if you feel sick.

After Travel

If you traveled to China or Iran, you will be placed into a 14-day quarantine by public health. If you traveled to Italy, Japan and South Korea, you will be asked to voluntarily self-isolate for 14 days. For additional information about self-isolation, please visit: [Iowa Department of Public Health's Website](#).

As previously stated, there is no guidance from CDC regarding travel restrictions within the United States. If you think you, or your, child has been exposed to COVID-19 on a trip, please call your school nurse first before sending your child to school. The school nurse can help assess the situation and provide guidance regarding travel and COVID-19.

For frequently asked questions and answers regarding travel including: should I cancel my trip, is it safe to go on a cruise, risk of COVID-19 on an airplane and returning from a recently affected country, please visit: [CDC - Travel: Frequently Asked Questions and Answers](#)

We know COVID-19 is an emerging, rapidly evolving health situation. Information provided is up-to-date as of 3:00 PM March 13, 2020. Please visit the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)'s website for the most up-to-date travel information.

As a school district we will continue frequent communication with the Iowa Departments of Public Health and Education, and Winneshiek County Public Health, and then relay that information to our students, families, and staff.

Thanks for your support of Decorah Schools.

Mark M. Lane, Superintendent of Schools