

COVID-19 Novel Coronavirus

FAQ for Illinois Families - Summary



****THIS CONTENT WILL BE UPDATED AS NEW INFORMATION BECOMES AVAILABLE****

Dear Illinois Families,

A coalition of non-profit organizations created this COVID-19 fact sheet to get you relevant and timely information about: what COVID-19 (novel coronavirus) is, why schools have closed, what to do to keep your family safe and healthy, and what you can do to help to save lives and stop the spread of the virus. Please visit ISBE's COVID-19 website for the most up-to-date COVID-19 information: <https://www.isbe.net/COVID19>. If you have additional questions and concerns during this time, please contact your school and district first. If you are unable to reach your school or district, you may email your questions or concerns to ISBE's COVID-19 email: COVID19@isbe.net.

View the **comprehensive FAQ for Illinois Families** here: <https://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/COVID-FAQ.pdf> and the one-page **Where to Get Help** here: <https://partnersforeachandeverychild.org/wp-content/uploads/COVID-Flyer.pdf>.

COVID-19, the new coronavirus (a family of viruses that usually cause illnesses like the common cold), was discovered around December 2019 and has now spread throughout the world; this is why it is referred to as a “pandemic.” As the virus spreads, we are seeing some people with mild illness, some who get sick, and some who have died. The reason health officials are concerned is because the virus is new – this makes it hard to predict how it will continue to affect people.

Symptoms of COVID-19 can range from mild to severe and can include: Fever, Cough, Shortness of breath/trouble breathing. If you or someone in your family has any of these symptoms, call a medical facility and follow their instructions to address symptoms at home or come in to be seen. **DO NOT visit a medical facility unannounced.**

Who is at risk? According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (also, called the CDC), children do not seem to be at higher risk for getting COVID-19. People at higher risk are:

- Older Adults (People more than 60 years old.)
- People who have serious chronic medical conditions like: heart disease, diabetes, lung disease, and suppressed immune systems

Why are schools closing? How to help stop the virus from spreading. COVID-19 cases are increasing quickly but the state is hoping to slow down the spread of the virus. To keep hospitals from getting more patients than they can handle, and to make sure those who are at the highest risk of dying from COVID-19 receive the care they need, Illinois, along with other states, has closed public and private schools and issued a “stay at home” order. Illinois schools will be closed through the end of the 2019-20 school year and students will finish the year with remote learning.

There are resources that you can access during school closures. In addition to academic instruction, schools provide a way for many Illinois families to access meals and for essential workers to access childcare. Below is how Illinois is handling some of those issues, but please go to the comprehensive FAQ for detailed information.

- **Meals:** ISBE asks districts to make every effort to provide meals for all children who need them, no matter their resources and no matter what school they attend, in the way that works best for their community, such as allowing families to “grab-and-go” or to deliver the meals.
 - Students can receive two meals a day (one breakfast, one lunch, or one snack in any combination) and you can receive up to 3 days of meals at once. Meals can be distributed either by pick-up, drive-up, or

delivery (check with your local district about delivery options) by parents/guardians or the students themselves. Children do not need to be accompanied by an adult to receive food and parents can pick-up the food without children being present.

- Illinois' Pandemic Electronic Benefit Transfer (P-EBT) program is now funded to provide additional benefits to all SNAP-eligible households with school-aged children.
- **Childcare:** Districts, early education programs, licensed and license-exempt homes are not allowed to provide childcare due to concerns with the rapid spread of COVID-19. Applications are now being accepted for childcare facilities and others to apply to serve as Emergency Child Care Sites for the children of critical emergency (essential) workers.
- **Homework and Distance Learning:** Beginning March 31 and through the end of the 2019-20 school year, Illinois public schools will move into Remote Learning Days that will count as Instructional Days. During this time, school work will be given and graded, however, ISBE says that work completed during school closures **must not** negatively impact grades or academic standing, taking into account the fact that students have different access to support and technology at home. In addition, ISBE provides that schools **may** allow student work during school closures only to increase a student's academic standing. Illinois state agencies have released a map of hotspots to help students that do not have internet in their homes: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IBHE-Wifi-Hotspot-Map-Release.pdf>

There are a number of school policies that will need to be adjusted as a result of school closures. Here are a few:

- **Graduation:** School closures will not impact graduation requirements for students, but schools may allow student work to count during the closure in order to increase a student's academic standing.
- **Testing:** The Governor has ordered that state assessments, including the Illinois Assessment of Readiness, SAT, DLM-AA, the Illinois Science Assessment, and Constitution exam are all suspended for Spring 2020.
- **Special education:** All districts must ensure that every special education student receives equal access to educational opportunities that are provided to general education students. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (Section 504), and Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act should not prevent any school from offering educational programs through distance instruction; districts and schools must comply. ISBE has developed an in-depth FAQ focused on special education during remote learning: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/SPED-FAQ-04-20-20.pdf>.

As working parents and caregivers, there are likely a number of concerns that you have related to the impact of school closures on your ability to work, including housing, your ability to pay bills and immigration status. A few of those issues are addressed below.

- **Immigration:** The U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) issued the following statement: "USCIS encourages all those, including aliens, with symptoms that resemble Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) (fever, cough, shortness of breath) to seek necessary medical treatment or preventive services. Such treatment or preventive services will not negatively affect any alien as part of a future Public Charge analysis."
- **Housing:** The Governor has banned all evictions and utility shut-offs statewide during the duration of the COVID-19 emergency disaster declaration. Right now, the declaration extends until at least April 30, 2020.
- **Unemployment:** Unemployment benefits may be available to some individuals whose unemployment is related to COVID-19. Financial help is available in Illinois and Chicago for the many people who are taking a big financial hit during the pandemic. Illinois has launched a new website for COVID-19 resources, including unemployment eligibility for those impacted, at: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/unemployment-faqs>. The IL Department of Employment Security's unemployment benefits customer service phone number is: 800-244-5631 or 866-488-4016 TTY.

- **Other Financial Assistance:** Go to the Governor’s COVID-19 Economic Resources page to learn about a stoppage on utility shut-offs, food, free and low-cost internet access, and expansion of Medicaid.
<https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Resources/Pages/EconomicAssistance.aspx>.

How to protect your family. There is currently no vaccine to prevent COVID-19, but there are few things you can do to keep your family healthy:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** Soap and water is best, but when there is no soap and water use hand sanitizer.
- **Do not** make your own hand sanitizer.
- Keep your kids away from others who are sick. Keep kids at home if they are ill.
- Teach kids to cough and sneeze into a tissue (make sure to throw it away after each use!) or to cough and sneeze into their arm or elbow, not their hands.
- Clean your house as usual with regular household cleaning sprays or wipes.
- **Try not to touch your own face. Teach your children not to touch their face.** (It’s hard not to touch your face or rub your eyes. Wash your face with soap and water instead.)

How to talk to your children about COVID-19. There’s a lot of news coverage about the outbreak of COVID-19 and it can be overwhelming for adults and scary to children. The American Academy of Pediatrics is encouraging families to work closely with children to filter information and talk about the virus in a way that your child can understand. Tips can help:

- **Simple reassurance.** Remind children that health officials and doctors are learning as much as they can, as fast as they can, about the virus and are taking steps to keep everyone safe.
- **Give them control.** It’s also a great time to remind your children of what they can do to help – washing their hands often, coughing into a tissue or their sleeves, and getting enough sleep.
- **Watch for signs of anxiety.** Children may not have the words to express their worry, but you may see signs of it. They may get cranky, be more clingy, have trouble sleeping, or seem distracted. Keep the reassurance going and try to stick to your normal routines.
- **Monitor their media.** Keep young children away from scary images they may see on TV, social media, computers, etc. For older children, talk together about what they are hearing on the news and correct any misinformation or rumors you may hear.
- **Be good role model.** COVID-19 doesn’t discriminate.

How to stay informed. For regular updates on what’s happening and how you can help:

- For more information and national updates go to the CDC’s website: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html>; in multiple languages here: CDC Resources in Multiple Languages: <https://www.cdc.gov/pubs/other-languages?Sort=Lang%3A%3Aasc&fbclid=IwAR1GWgtsT1G6CJqfXVYmL43E0CV4mMf0uWHIY6O6-Nc5a9zGsaAK0wtlfO8>
- For information provided by the Illinois Governor’s office please go to the state website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/sites/coronavirus/Pages/default.aspx>
- For ISBE’s Remote Learning Recommendations please go here: <https://www.isbe.net/Documents/RL-Recommendations-3-27-20.pdf>; a map of Illinois statewide hotspots is available here: <http://illinois.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=23e8046edd2940bc8ad3ad1725e47cd0>
- *If you don’t have reliable internet access, please stay tuned to your local public radio station for updates: WBEZ 91.5 Chicago*