



Mrs. Mary A. Morris
Superintendent of Schools

Board of Education

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Dear Cheektowaga Central School District Families and Community,

Due to the growing concerns regarding the **Coronavirus or COVID-19** around the world, I am writing to you today to help calm concerns and worry, but share vital information about this virus. As superintendent of schools I can assure you that I have your children's best interest in mind when I say that education of our entire community regarding health protocols (and safety), is necessary as we seek to prevent the spread of this disease. Please read through this letter and familiarize yourself with its contents.

What is the Coronavirus?

Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID 19) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person. The virus that causes COVID 19 is referred to as a Novel (new) Coronavirus that was first identified during an investigation into an outbreak in the Wuhan, Hubei Province of China. The virus is spreading from person to person in China, Iran, Italy and limited spread among close contacts in some countries.

What is Cheektowaga Central School District Doing?

Through collaboration with health officials and our surrounding communities, our school district (as well as all others) can play an important role in disseminating information about COVID-19 and can prepare as well as take steps to prevent the spread of this virus among our students.

Cheektowaga Central Schools is well under way in ensuring that you have the information you need regarding respiratory illness (flu, coronavirus, etc.), symptoms of Coronavirus or COVID-19 and what to do if you are sick or diagnosed with the Coronavirus/COVID-19.

- Cheektowaga CSD placed a letter of information to parents/community regarding the Coronavirus and a link to the Erie County Department of Health on the district website in the 1st week of February, 2020.
- The Office of Buildings and Grounds has instituted regular sanitizing of desks, classrooms and common contact items such as doorknobs, sinks, etc. in an effort to assist in prevention germ spread.
- The district will be adding additional hand sanitizer dispensers beyond what is already existing within all buildings, district-wide.
- Union East, Cheektowaga Middle School and Cheektowaga High School are all monitoring absentee rates and communicating with building level clinics regarding flu cases, illness and other reasons for student absences.

- Nurses within each building clinic are advising parents to keep children home when sick and reminding students of hand washing protocols.
- Cheektowaga CSD is developing a plan of action to minimize disruption to teaching and learning, should there be an outbreak of cases of the coronavirus or COVID-19 locally that impacts the need to close schools.

What do we know?

Since this virus is very new, health authorities continue to carefully watch how this virus spreads. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is working hard to learn as much as possible about this virus, so that we can better understand how it spreads and causes illness. The CDC considers this virus to be a serious public health concern and is working closely with state as well as other federal agencies, developing testing protocols that can assist in the overall containment of the virus. Based on current information, the CDC recommends avoiding travel to China as well as other international destinations and to some degree, has limited those whom have travelled abroad to enter the US.

How Does Coronavirus-COVID 19 spread?

The virus that causes COVID-19 is believed to have been spread from animals to humans and is now spreading from person to person. It's unclear how easily or sustainably the virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading between people. You can learn more about what is known about the spread of newly emerged Coronavirus or COVID 19 at:

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/transmission.html>

What are the symptoms of Coronavirus or COVID-19?

Patients with COVID-19 may have had mild to severe respiratory illness with symptoms of:

- Fever
- Cough
- Shortness of breath
- **severe complications from this virus can also include pneumonia in both lungs*

Prevention

There are currently no vaccines and no specific antiviral treatments available to protect against this virus. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) recommends the following ways to minimize the spread of ALL respiratory viruses, including the Coronavirus or COVID-19:

- **Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.** Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol if soap and water are not available.
- **Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.**
- **Avoid close contact with people who are sick.**
- **Stay home when you are sick.**
- **Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue, or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.** *If you use a tissue, throw it in the trash, wash/sanitize hands.*
- **Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.**
- **If you have recently travelled to China within the past 14 days and feel sick with cough, fever or difficulty breathing, you should seek medical care immediately. Call your health*

care provider before you go and share information regarding your travel and your symptoms.

This is an emerging, rapidly changing situation. For questions, please contact your local department of health, the NYSDOH or the NYSDOH Novel Coronavirus Hotline at 1-888-364-3065.

We encourage you to keep up to date about the coronavirus or COVID-19, its treatment and prevention by visiting the following websites:

- CDC's dedicated website regarding the coronavirus or COVID-19: <https://www.cdc.gov/nCoV>
- NYSDOH's dedicated coronavirus or COVID-19 website: <https://www.health.ny.gov/diseases/communicable/coronavirus/>
- NYSDOH directory of local health departments: https://www.health.ny.gov/contact/contact_information/
- New York State Center for School Health website: www.schoolhealthny.com

With all children's health and wellness in mind,

Mary A. Morris
Superintendent