School Guidance Regarding Response to COVID-19 Cases Within Your School

Before a Case Occurs

1. **Have a communication plan for parents/guardians and media.**

- Identify an individual in the school who will be the designated representative to receive COVID-19 information from Local Public Health (LPH). Make sure to communicate who the designated representative is to LPH. Utilize school nursing staff, when available, as the designated representative.
- Outline how parents/guardians will be notified if a student or staff is confirmed to have COVID19.
    - Communicate with parents/guardians on how they will be notified if their child is considered a close contact.
    - It is strongly recommended to communicate with parents/guardians if their child is not a close contact determined by LPH.
    - Outline the information that will be shared with the media. Additionally, outline specific information that will not be shared with the media (ex: student's name, class, or age).
    - If the school has a social media presence, use this source to communicate necessary information to the school population, including parents/guardians and students. (Once again, it is strongly recommended to be clear what type of information will and will not be shared through this form of communication.)
- Send communication to parents/guardians that outlines the plan, so they are aware. Additionally, place the plan on your webpage, if available.
    - This allows parents/guardians to comment and make any recommendations before an outbreak may occur.
    - Highlight links to the CDC, DPHHS, LPH or any other source used as guidance for in making decisions.

- Notify parents/guardians that if a student or staff tests positive for COVID-19, but public health has determined no school exposure occurred, then no notification would be released. For example: a teacher who was on vacation returns to the area and tests positive for COVID-19 but has not been to school or interacted with any students or staff recently (using CDC definition of 48 hours before symptoms, or if no symptoms 48 hours before the positive test).

2) Have a communication plan outlined and readily available so it can be sent out quickly to parents/guardians notifying them of a positive case within the school and what next steps they can expect.
- Communication if a student is a close contact
- Communication if a student is not a close contact
- Both types of communication should highlight where parents/guardians can go to get the latest information

If a COVID-19 Case Occurs Within a School

1) First, notify LPH.
- LPH will investigate and determine who is considered a close contact and who is not. This may be communicated with the designated representative. (ex: school nurse, if available)
- It is useful to agree on what information will and will not be released to the media from both LPH and the school.
  - If the media knows these parameters beforehand, this can be helpful.
  - Department of Public Health and Human Services (DPHHS) will release data weekly, which will include:
    - School Name
    - Recent or Closed Cases
      - After 14 days without a case, DPHHS will highlight if there are no recent cases within the school
    - Classifying cases – Staff or Student
    - To protect the confidentiality of individuals, schools with fewer than ten students enrolled will not be reported (in accordance with FERPA). If the student population of a school is 50 or less, we will not classify cases as student or staff.
    - You can find this information on our website at: https://dphhs.mt.gov/publichealth/cdepi/diseases/coronavirusmt/demographics

Scan the QR code with your smartphone's camera to visit our website.

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2) Inform parents/guardians that students who are close contacts will not be allowed to return to school until 14 days have passed since the individual's last exposure to the incident case – even if the close contact has a negative COVID-19 test.
- LPH may still request a close contact be tested.

3) Inform parents/guardians where they can get this latest information regarding COVID-19 within the school.