



COLORADO
Department of Education
Commissioner of Education

201 East Colfax Avenue
Denver, CO 80203-1799

March 3, 2020

Dear Superintendents and BOCES Directors,

I hope you are all well. I know you have all been watching the developing news about coronavirus (COVID-19) over the weekend, as have I. We're all concerned about the health and safety of our students, staff and communities, and we want to make sure that we have solid plans in place. Thankfully, we do not have any cases of COVID-19 in Colorado to date. I am grateful that we all have some time to make sure that our emergency plans are up-to-date and to make any necessary adjustments to the plans for the evolving COVID-19 situation.

I have heard from a number of you over the last few days who have questions about state-level guidance for your planning, so I wanted to reach out again today with some additional information that may be helpful. And, as the situation evolves, we will determine whether it would be helpful to have additional forms of communications, such as a conference call or group video chat.

As I mentioned last week, [the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment](#) is taking the lead on this issue for the state. You and your local health departments should look to CDPHE for best practices on prevention, guidance on potential closures, guidance on travel and other health related issues. My staff is in close touch with CDPHE and the Governor's Office, and we will forward any updates from them directly to you as appropriate. If you haven't seen it yet, CDPHE has already provided helpful guidance. We have collected those resources for you [here](#). Also, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has [this guidance for schools](#).

Here are some contacts at CDE that may be helpful to you as you are looking at your emergency plans in light of the evolving COVID-19 situation:

- **Sarah Blumenthal** in our Health and Wellness Unit serves as CDE's liaison between CDPHE and school nurses. If you have any questions for her, you can reach her at 303.866.6779 or Blumenthal_s@cde.state.co.us.
- **Brehan Riley** is the director of our School Nutrition Unit, and she will be working with districts and the USDA on emergency feeding operations. You can reach her at 303.866.6299 or riley_b@cde.state.co.us.
- **Jennifer Okes**, our chief operating officer at CDE, can provide guidance on instructional hours and will be helping me consider flexibilities if necessary. You can reach Jennifer at 303-866-2996 or okes_j@cde.state.co.us.
- **Dana Smith**, our chief communications officer, can assist you with communications if that would be helpful. She is available at smith_d@cde.state.co.us or 303-866-6682.



Of course, please contact me directly or your Field Services representative if you have questions or if guidance on other issues would be helpful. I have received some specific questions about the Governor's (and/or CDPHE's) role in this situation and how it might impact your decisions if they were to issue guidance or any state proclamations. We are currently working with the Governor's office to get the latest information. The ability to close schools lies with local school boards 22-32-109 (N)(II)(A) CRS. However, there may be situations when the Governor or CDPHE would have additional information that would impact determinations about school operations.

If you haven't already, I urge you to sign up for the Emergency Notification System hosted by the Colorado Department of Public Safety, Colorado School Safety Resource Center, and Colorado Information Analysis Center. To sign up for important updates, visit <https://ciacco.org/> and click on School Personnel Registration. [Click here](#) for full instructions.

I am also considering setting up a special emergency contact list in our text messaging system just for superintendents. I would build this list using the cell phone numbers that our Field Services team has for you. If you do not want to be on this list, please let our communications staff know by emailing cde_communicatons_office@cde.state.co.us.

While all of our operations at CDE are continuing as normal to date, we are looking at our own plans for continuity of our operations as well as our plans to support districts and BOCES in the event that our communities experience cases of COVID-19.

Again, if there is anything we can do to be helpful to you, please do not hesitate to reach out to me or any of the contacts listed here.

Sincerely,



Katy Anthes, Ph.D.
Commissioner

