

March 5, 2020

Dear SAM Members,

In response to the Coronavirus (COVID-19), the School Administrators of Montana (SAM) wants to provide you with current updates from MT DPHHS, the Montana COVID-19 Task Force, and the OPI.

There are currently no positive cases of COVID-19 in Montana. However, as with any infectious disease, schools and communities should practice preventative measures and be prepared to respond to infectious diseases should they impact your community.

The [new school health and safety rules](#) from DPHHS require schools to have communicable or infectious illness procedures requiring someone with a possible infectious disease to be isolated and potentially evaluated in coordination with the local health department. This protocol will help you not only respond to distant threats such as COVID-19 but also to more immediate threats in Montana such as norovirus or flu outbreaks

First and foremost, the OPI, DPHHS, and CDC encourage schools to practice basic preventative measures including keeping sick students and faculty home, regularly washing hands and having hand sanitation stations available, as well as avoiding transmission through sanitary practices.

Your local county health department is your best resource for getting updates on infectious diseases and how to handle them should they impact your community. DPHHS and the CDC provide regular updates to local health departments. Additionally, DPHHS has created a [COVID-19 specific webpage](#) with information and resources. The [CDC also maintains a webpage](#) with COVID-19 information.

Governor Bullock recently held a [press conference](#) where he announced that the state is activating a coronavirus task force. The following are the key takeaways from State Medical Officer Dr. Holzman:

- Class and school activities should not be canceled without consultation with your local health departments and any communications regarding cancelations should be a joint effort.

- The existing statutes regarding school closures can be found [HERE](#) and [HERE](#).
- In the event of a coronavirus case in a community, local and state health officials will determine the level of response. A small number of cases with minor symptoms will most likely result in at-home self-quarantine. It would not necessarily mean that you have to close the school.
- In the event of a larger outbreak in a community, local and state health officials will communicate with you on the need to cancel school and activities for an extended period of time.
[Per-pupil-instruction-hours](#) could be waived if the Governor declares a state of emergency in your county. We encourage school leaders to have a plan in place that will allow students to continue their coursework from home.

SAM will continue to update you with current information as it is made available. Thank you for your vigilance in keeping your students, staff, and community protected from infectious diseases.

Kirk Miller
Executive Director