
Frequently Asked Questions

COVID-19 @ Schenectady City School District



March 18 2020 6:30 PM

Guidance, updates & day-to-day operations during COVID-19 school closures



Thank you!

We know that tensions are high and the stress and anxiety of the COVID-19 pandemic is weighing on everyone. Our work over the next week and beyond may look different than usual, but our vision remains the same -- we will be a continually improving school district dedicated to excellence in teaching and learning, equity, engagement and efficiency. While the way in which we deliver this might look different, we appreciate the work that you are doing to provide some sense of normalcy to our students and their families. It is because of you that we can ensure that, Everybody Counts; and, Everybody Learns!

Questions & Answers

Following are some questions that we have either received or anticipated. We will continue to update this document as soon as information becomes available. Please understand that this is a fluid situation and the information contained here is only as good as the date and time listed above. Please continue to check your email and our website for the most up-to-date information. Please exercise caution regarding the information you may see about the COVID-19 on social media. The Schenectady County Department of Health, in conjunction with the New York State Department of Health, provides the only official confirmation of any communicable disease, including COVID-19.

General Questions

Q: Why did the Schenectady City School District (SCSD) make the decision to close our schools?

A: SCSD made the decision to close our schools due to the Mayor of Schenectady declaring a State of Emergency in the City. While **there are still no confirmed cases of coronavirus in our district**, out of an abundance of caution SCSD cancelled all classes from March 16-20, including extracurricular and outside activities across our district. While the District Leadership Team closely monitors the COVID-19 pandemic, we are relying upon the experts in the Schenectady County Department of Health, per the Governor's most recent executive order, for definitive guidance regarding the length of time that classes should be cancelled. Specific guidance regarding the length of closure is still unclear. At this time, we have not been directed by Schenectady County Public Health officials to close our schools. We have made a local decision to give us time to assess the ever-changing situation. The Superintendent, along with other area Superintendents, and the Capital Region BOCES District Superintendent, will continue conversations with state and county officials in the coming days to seek guidance and clarification on the proper length of time for school cancellations during these unprecedented times. **Due to the executive order from the Governor, our schools are now closed through 3/31/2020.**

Q: What are students and teachers doing during this school closure?

A: The district has taken several measures and has a plan for students to continue to be educated while at home. Instruction will be provided each day. Teachers and students will access lessons and resources online. Breakfast and lunch will still be provided even while school is closed. Families have been provided a pick-up time and location. The specific details surrounding this can be found in a letter sent home with students on Friday, March 13, which is posted on our website.

Q: What is Social Distancing/Universal Precautions?

A: Social distancing is a way to try to reduce the spread of infections. A poster was distributed to any locations that may still be occupied by staff but it is not meant to constitute medical advice. Social distancing includes:

- Cleaning your hands regularly with soap and/or hand sanitizer
- Minding how you cough and sneeze
- Avoiding large crowds and events
- Rationing hugs and kisses
- Swapping out handshakes
- Reworking high fives
- Delaying visiting large venues
- Chatting on the phone or holding meetings online
- Keeping travel to a minimum
- Staying home when you are sick
- Treat all bodily fluids as though they are infectious

Access to Buildings, Supplies, Devices or Materials

Q: Can Teachers work in their classrooms?

A: No, teachers cannot work in their classrooms. This period of closure is due to the Mayor of the City declaring a state of emergency, but it also allows for social distancing, and the ability for our facilities staff to do deeper cleaning and disinfecting. **Out of an abundance of caution, swipe access has been turned off to all buildings for non-essential staff.**

Q: Can Teachers come and get supplies from their classrooms?

A: Yes, however they must follow these protocols:

- Teachers must call the building before going
- If the request can't be met by sending information electronically, then the staff member can come to the building only for the time and purpose of obtaining those materials and then immediately leave
- It would be our desire that building staff obtain the materials for you and leave them in the secure vestibule, or designated area, with your name on it to pick up at a designated time.
- Social distancing protocols and universal precautions must be adhered to
- If you are sick or exhibiting any symptoms, please stay home

Q: Families have reached out to get the information or device that they missed on Friday, 3/13. How can they still get the information or a device?

A: Please direct them to check our website for the most up-to-date information, including the packet that was handed out to students on Friday. We understand that some students may not have been in attendance and may still need access to devices. Our tech team will be inventorying our devices and will be having additional opportunities for families to get a device loaned to them at one of our meal sites – as early as Tuesday. As soon as a distribution schedule is ready, we will be posting it to our website and communicating it widely. We will continue to do this daily.

Q: Where should I direct families that still need a device or internet access?

A: If any of your students are in need of a Chromebook, because they do not have a device at home (computer, laptop, Chromebook, tablet, etc.), please provide the following information in [Let's Talk:](#)

1. Student's name
2. Student's lunch ID number
3. School your student attends
4. Your student's grade (PK-12)
5. Your contact phone number
6. Do you also need Internet access at home?

The SCSD Technology Team will work to process your request as quickly as possible and will be in touch with a location in which we can distribute it to the student.

Q: Staff have reached out to get the information or device that they missed on Friday, 3/13. How can they still get the information or a device?

A: Please direct them to check our website for the most up-to-date information, including the packet that was handed out to students on Friday. We understand that some staff may not have responded to the survey. Our tech team will be inventorying our devices and will be having additional opportunities for staff to get a device loaned to them. Please submit your request in Let's Talk under the category, Technology.

Q: Can families come to pick up belongings that their child left in school?

A: This can be coordinated through each school office but handled on a case by case basis following these protocols:

- Parents should call the building before going
- If the request can't be met by sending information electronically, then the parent or student can come to the building only for the time and purpose of obtaining those items and then immediately leave
- It would be our desire that building staff obtain the items for the student and leave them in the secure vestibule, or designated area, with their name on it to pick up at a designated time.
- Social distancing protocols and universal precautions must be adhered to
- If parents or students are sick or exhibiting any symptoms, they should stay home

Q: Can students and families use the playgrounds at our schools?

A: Playgrounds do not support social distancing and allow for congregations of more than 10 people at a time. As a result, playgrounds will be closed as a part of our school closure. Any playgrounds with gates will remain locked based on guidance the district has received from our Health, Safety and Risk Service.

Daily Operations

Q: Can families still register new students?

A: Yes, however we are working on protocols and will update the guidance on this in the next FAQ. For now, please refer families to call Registration at 518-881-3771 to schedule a time. Walk-ins and families who do not call ahead may be asked to wait outside if someone is currently being served.

Q: Can staff still pick-up paychecks from March 13?

A: No. Any paycheck not picked up on Friday, 3/13, will be mailed. If you haven't already signed up for direct deposit, please complete the [Direct Deposit Form](#) and return it to Payroll via Let's Talk.

Q: Can residents still come to pay their taxes?

A: Residents can pay their taxes [online](#) or at one of the local banks that accept school tax payments.

Q: Can new employees still be processed by Human Resources?

A: Yes, Human Resources will continue to process new employees at the Central Office.

Q: Will USPS mail, UPS, FedEx and other deliveries continue?

A: Yes, at this time, all deliveries should be continuing as normal. Please exercise universal precautions when interacting with any delivery person.

Q: The news media (TV, Newspaper, etc.) has reached out to me to comment about the closure. What should I do?

A: Please direct media inquires to our Public Information Specialist, Karen Corona, at 518-370-8100 x40137 or CoronaK@schenectady.12.ny.us

Meetings, Interviews and Gatherings

Q: We have someone from BOCES that works in our department. Can they still come to work?

A: Yes, non-teaching BOCES staff can still continue to work in the departments that they are assigned.

Q: We have a CSE meeting scheduled. Should we continue?

A: Yes, but only if the CSE meeting can be managed virtually and all members, including families, agree. Otherwise the meeting should be rescheduled for when it can be conducted in person.

Q: We have interviews scheduled. Should we reschedule?

A: Not necessarily, especially if they can still be conducted using Google Meet, WebEx or some other virtual medium. If interviews are conducted in person, please refrain from conducting large committee interviews. More importantly, please do not come to the school unless you have been in contact with your administrator and you have been approved to come in for that purpose. Be sure to exercise social distancing protocols and universal precautions.

Q: Will the Board of Education meeting scheduled for Wednesday, March 18 be cancelled?

A: Yes, since this meeting was a special meeting called for the purposes of budget presentation and preparation, no items were up for vote or approval. Instead the budget presentation schedule for March 18 will be provided to the board and posted for the public to Board Docs.

Q: I have a meeting scheduled with an outside partner or a vendor. Can we still meet?

A: Yes, but please exercise universal precautions and refrain from any large group meetings.

Things People Can Do To Help

Q: Can a staff member sign up to work at a meal site?

A: We have received several requests to assist at meal sites and we really appreciate your willingness to help! At this time, our meal preparation and distribution is covered. We will update this should circumstances change.

Q: Can a staff member deliver a meal to a family experiencing a hardship or other barrier in getting to a meal site?

A: No. For the safety of our students, their families and our staff, meals should not be delivered. We

are working on solutions to assist families with challenges they are facing, but that will also minimize the risk of exposure to COVID-19. An update with more details will be provided in the next FAQ.

Q: Can a student sign up to work at a meal site?

A: No, students do not technically have time off. They should be attending to their own meal-taking and virtual learning. We appreciate their willingness to help; there is sufficient staff to help during meal distribution times.

Q: How can students, parents or staff members be helpful?

A: Please follow what we are asking you to do and stay up-to-date with the latest information from our website. Our guidance is provided in an effort to keep our community safe. Children, their families and their communities impacted by coronavirus will need continued relief in the days and months to come. If you still want to help, continue to exercise social distancing and universal precautions, but consider donating to one of the food pantries or a local organization of your choosing that is providing assistance to those in need. Above all, put your health and wellbeing first; stay healthy and safe.

Exposure to COVID-19 and Health-related Risks

Q: Should I continue to report if I have traveled to a high-risk area or if I have been or potentially been exposed to COVID-19?

A: Yes. We continue to request that you let us know if you have traveled to a high-risk area, have been exposed to COVID-19 or have been in contact with someone who has been exposed in the last fourteen days. To make it easy for you, we've set up a confidential document. [Self-report here.](#)

Q: I have a letter from the county DOH that I should be quarantined for 14-days due to being exposed to COVID-19. Although I am quarantined can I continue to work from home?

A: Yes, assuming you are not sick and exhibiting symptoms, you should contact your supervisor to discuss any necessary accommodations so that you can work from home.

Q: I have become symptomatic. What should I do?

A: You should seek medical care right away. You should call ahead to your medical provider to tell them about your symptoms. You should follow the advice of your doctor and report back to your supervisor.

Q: Another staff member, student or family member notifies you that someone in their household is symptomatic or has been exposed to COVID-19. What should they do?

A: The staff member or family should be directed to the local health department. Decisions about the need for exclusion and the length of the exclusion period for students and staff exposed to or with confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be made by local health departments according to guidance from New York State Department of Health. Once they have completed all of these steps, they should report the outcome to their supervisor.

Q: I was tested and have a confirmed case of COVID-19, what should I do?

A: Stay home and self-isolate. In most cases, COVID-19 illnesses present as mild, with fever and cough. The majority of people who are infected do not require hospitalization. A small percentage of those infected will present with severe respiratory symptoms. In most cases the person will immediately be isolated and on-going medical evaluation will be guided by the Department of Health and Medical Providers. Be sure to follow-up with your primary care physician and also follow their advice. Report the outcome back to your supervisor.

Q: You or someone you know or work with was in direct contact with a person that has a confirmed case of COVID-19 or is a person under investigation (PUI) but not yet confirmed. Or, you were exposed to someone who has had direct contact with a person with a confirmed case of COVID-19. What should you do?

A: Stay home and self-isolate until you receive direction and guidance from the local health department. Questions regarding student or staff exposure to COVID-19 should be directed to the local health department (Schenectady County Public Health: 518-386-2810) . Decisions about the need for exclusion and the length of the exclusion period for students and staff exposed to or with confirmed cases of COVID-19 will be made by local health departments according to guidance from New York State Department of Health. Schools have the authority to exclude a student or staff member who shows symptoms of any communicable or infectious disease reportable under the public health law that imposes a significant risk of infection of others in the school. Stay home and self-isolate. In most cases, COVID-19 illnesses present as mild, with fever and cough. The majority of people who are infected do not require hospitalization. A small percentage of those infected will present with severe respiratory symptoms. In most cases the person will immediately be isolated and on-going medical evaluation will be guided by the Department of Health and Medical Providers.

Q: I was exposed to someone that was in contact with a person that has a confirmed case of COVID-19, however I was not in direct contact. Or, I have no known exposure. Am I still at risk?

A: The answer for both of these is the same. You are generally at low risk, but you should still exercise universal precautions. There is no need to contact the local department of health or to stay home, unless you are feeling sick. You should continue to practice general flu prevention measures. To protect yourself and others, the CDC recommends:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water is not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- 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 cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Avoid sharing items like dishes, cups, eating utensils, bedding and towels.

Employee Health & Safety

Q: What measures have our insurance providers taken in order to ensure the health and safety of our employees?

A: Employees that participate in the Patriot Blue Plan through BlueShield of Northeastern New York can expect the following immediate measures:

- \$0 cost share / waived deductible for Doctor on Demand telemedicine visits on all Fully Insured Commercial, ASO, and Medicare Advantage plans (HSA included)
 - BSNEY strongly recommends that members first use telehealth or telemedicine to connect with a doctor when possible
- \$0 cost share / waived deductible for COVID-19 diagnostic tests on all Fully Insured Commercial, ASO, and Medicare Advantage plans (HSA included)
 - BSNEY will pay for the test for members that meet the CDC guidelines for testing.
 - All tests require a referring physician's order.
 - BSNEY will not require prior authorizations for COVID-19 testing
- \$0 cost share / waived deductible for all participating physician office, urgent care and emergency room visits for diagnostic testing related to COVID-19 - not the ongoing treatment - on all Fully Insured Commercial, ASO, and Medicare Advantage plans (HSA included)
 - BSNEY encourages members to use their mail order benefit to obtain a 90-day supply of current prescriptions
 - Members with 25% of their current prescription remaining should refill or renew their medication at retail pharmacies, consistent with CDC's recommendation
- The following is a message from Keith Dolan, Regional Executive, BlueShield of Northeastern New York, explaining why we are taking these measures:
 - "We all have a shared responsibility to keep our community healthy, and we want our employer groups and our members to know that we're here for them. Our focus now is on slowing the spread of this illness and making sure that if a person does become seriously ill, they are able to access the care that they need in a timely way."
- Timely information and updates on BSNEY continued response to COVID-19 can be found at bsneny.com.

Q: I subscribe to a different insurance carrier. How can I find out what measures they are taking?

A: Start with the carrier's website or call their contact center for additional details. As our insurance providers share information with SCSD, we will update this FAQ.

Other Questions

Q: My question was not answered here. What should I do?

A: The District has set-up a Let's Talk that you can access from our website. For questions regarding

the day-to-day operations of our school, please submit them under the topic of COVID-19. If teachers have questions about materials or online resources, there is a separate topic for Online Classrooms.