March 23, 2020

Dear Parents and Families,

We are writing today to provide you with the latest updates on Chicago Public Schools’ (CPS’) response to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). As you know, the situation is changing quickly, and the public health response is evolving, too.

During the early phase of the COVID-19 pandemic in Chicago, the Chicago Department of Public Health (CDPH) was focused most on containing the spread of COVID-19. These efforts meant identifying suspected or confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Chicago, finding and interviewing all direct contacts, and monitoring those contacts for the 14-day quarantine period. As the virus has moved into the community spread phase, CDPH is adapting its response to best keep our communities safe.

**CDPH will continue to notify CPS if they learn of students or staff who test positive for COVID-19.**

Upon verification from CDPH that a student or staff member has tested positive for COVID-19, CPS will notify and advise schools about the next steps, as appropriate, following the guidance of CDPH. Persons believed to have had close contact with verified cases will be advised in a manner consistent with the most up-to-date guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Starting March 31, 14 days after schools were closed, CPS will no longer notify school communities to self-quarantine if a member of their school community tests positive, with the exception of emergency personnel who continue to diligently work in our schools. School-wide notifications are no longer necessary following the 14-day window because there is no longer a risk that transmission occurred while school was in session.

**Help fight the spread of rumors and protect the privacy rights of our community.**

Despite our fears, we cannot abandon our commitment to treating others with respect and dignity, nor can we violate others’ privacy or protected health information. Sharing unconfirmed information about those who have tested positive for COVID-19 will not contain the spread of the virus, but it can potentially hurt community members by isolating and stigmatizing them. Discrimination and stigma will make the pain that this pandemic has caused even worse. It is everyone’s responsibility to protect personal health information during the COVID-19 health crisis.

It is important to note that each person has the right to control their own personal health information, and the district cannot require employees, students, or their families to disclose.

We are committed to supporting each of our school communities through this pandemic, and we will continue to send regular updates about the district’s response and how we are working to keep our students and staff members healthy and safe. Please stay up to date on the actions we all can take to help minimize the spread of COVID-19 using trusted sources (e.g., the CDC, the CDPH, and CPS).

We are here for you. Contact OSHW at oshw@cps.edu or 773-553-KIDS (5437) if you need help locating medical care or have questions.

We want to acknowledge that our world seems to change in the blink of an eye. Uncertainties raise so many questions. We ask that you take care of yourselves and each other. Physical distances may be necessary to minimize our risk, but social cohesion and emotional closeness will keep us well.
Sincerely,

Kenneth Fox, MD
Chief Health Officer
Chicago Public Schools

Allison Arwady, MD
Commissioner
Chicago Department of Public Health