STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

MOLLY M. SPEARMAN
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

MEMORANDUM

TO: District Superintendents
Principals
Public Information Officers

FROM: Molly M. Spearman
State Superintendent of Education

DATE: March 9, 2020

RE: COVID-19 Guidance

The spread of the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) and its emergence in the U.S. are prompting questions about its potential impact on workplaces, communities and schools. The South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), working closely with the Governor's Office and the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), is monitoring this rapidly developing situation and is preparing regular updates for schools and districts.

Any decisions regarding school closures or cancelling school events as a result of COVID-19 should not be made solely at the local level. Please consult with the State Superintendent of Education who will work with state health officials at DHEC and the Governor's office for the final appropriate decision. In addition, any announcement of local cases should come from state DHEC officials.

Although health officials are still learning about the virus, a number of resources are available now and are being updated as new information becomes available. The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has developed interim guidance for schools that includes information on what to do before and in the event of COVID-19 being identified in the school's community.

I also encourage you to familiarize yourself with the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) web page devoted to COVID-19. The SCDE has created a web page on which it will post the most up-to-date COVID-19 information and links as we receive it. In addition, the SCDE will be participating in daily state COVID-19 updates and has developed an internal working group that is collaborating with other state leaders to develop guidance and determine flexibilities in our schools and districts in the event that COVID-19 impacts South Carolina. Those include:

- Potential school closures;
- Attendance policies;
- State assessments and testing windows;
- Food services; and
- eLearning and remote student instruction.

As you know, the situation is receiving significant media attention, but there is no reason for panic. The best response to any infectious virus is prevention. Make sure to encourage your staff, students, and families to follow best preventive measures, to include:

- Washing hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds;
- Avoiding close contact with those who are sick;
- Using alcohol-based hand sanitizers (60% alcohol or above) when hand-washing is unavailable;
- Avoiding large crowds and international trips to the following countries with a level-2 or higher advisory alert from the CDC: China, South Korea, Italy, Iran, and Japan;
- Covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and coughing into your elbow;
- Cleaning frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household detergent and water.
- Encouraging staff or students who feel sick to stay home unless they are seeking medical care; and
- Getting this year's influenza vaccine if you have not already done so.

We will send you additional guidance and information in the coming days and weeks. In the meantime, the single best contingency planning lies within strong local policies and procedures. Because the virus has not yet reached South Carolina, now would be an opportune time to revisit and strengthen any relevant district policies.

Thank you for prioritizing the safety and security of your students and staff. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to Ryan Brown, rybrown@ed.sc.gov or 803-734-5080, if you have questions.