



County of Bucks
OFFICE OF PUBLIC INFORMATION
55 EAST COURT STREET, 5TH FLOOR
DOYLESTOWN, PENNSYLVANIA 18901
215-348-6415

County Commissioners
Diane M. Ellis-Marseglia, LCSW, *Chair*
Robert J. Harvie Jr., *Vice Chair*
Gene DiGirolamo

March 6, 2020

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Larry R. King, 215-348-6413, lrking@buckscounty.org

Central Bucks Closes Five Schools Temporarily as a COVID-19 Precaution

The Central Bucks School District, in consultation with the Pennsylvania and Bucks County Departments of Health, today closed five district schools for at least one day as a precaution against possible spread of coronavirus.

The decision was made late last night by Central Bucks Superintendent Dr. John Kopicki after learning that a person from out of state, who is now known to have coronavirus, attended a recent private gathering at a residence in Central Bucks County.

At the time of that gathering, it was not known to anyone, including the out-of-state attendee, that the person was ill with the COVID-19 virus. Confirmation was made at a later date.

Present at the private gathering were multiple children and staff who attend or work at Central Bucks High School South, Tohickon and Tamanend Middle Schools, and Butler and Titus Elementary Schools – the schools that are closed today.

“Late last evening CBSD was made aware that individuals within the district were exposed to a confirmed case of Coronavirus,” said an alert posted early this morning on the school district website, www.cbsd.org. *“After consulting with local and state health authorities, and out of an abundance of caution, CBSD has decided to close 5 schools today, March 6, 2020. Butler, CB South, Titus, Tohickon and Tamanend will be closed today for students, teachers and staff. Additional information will be posted on CBSD.org.”*

The Bucks County Department of Health today will continue its work to contact those who attended private gathering, and to check them for any symptoms of illness. Any found to have symptoms such as the fever, cough or shortness of breath often associated with coronavirus will be tested.

The school closings were announced several hours before Gov. Tom Wolf confirmed this morning the [first two presumptive positive cases](#) of COVID-19 in Pennsylvania: One in Delaware County, the other in Wayne County. Both involve adults who are currently confined to their residences.

There have been no confirmed cases of coronavirus in Bucks County. State and local health officials continue to urge residents to practice preventive steps such as:

- Frequent hand-washing with soap and warm water for at least 20 seconds
- Avoiding close contact (within six feet) with people who are sick
- Avoiding touching one's eyes, nose and mouth
- Staying home when sick
- Covering one's coughs or sneezes with a tissue and throwing the tissue in the trash
- Cleaning and disinfecting frequently touched objects and surfaces with household cleaning sprays or wipes

Wearing face masks during one's daily routine is not recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an effective preventive measure against COVID-19 and other respiratory diseases. However, people with symptoms of COVID-19, health workers and people who are taking care of an ill person in close settings should wear face masks.

The incubation period for a person exposed to COVID-19 – the time between exposure and first appearance of symptoms – is between two and 14 days. Those who have been in contact with a person known to have COVID-19, or those who have traveled recently to a growing number of countries where there have been outbreaks, are asked to self-quarantine themselves for 14 days from the time of potential exposure.

In an update posted this afternoon on the school district's website, Kopicki said all Central Bucks school buildings will be closed to activities throughout the weekend. They will be deep-cleaned during that time, as will district buses. No decision has been made as to when schools will re-open.

According to Dr. David Damsker, director of the Bucks County Health Department, the department has been paying attention to COVID-19 since December, when early reports of an unknown respiratory illness began emerging from China.

Since the end of January, county health officials have been in frequent contact with the Pennsylvania Department of Health (PA DOH) and CDC as the situation evolved into a global health response. In early February, CDC began issuing recommendations for travelers returning from overseas areas where there have been outbreaks.

Since then, Bucks County health officials have been contacting all travelers returning here from nations of concern, advising them on self-quarantine, and helping them monitor for symptoms of the virus.

At this time, testing for COVID-19 can be conducted only at CDC and the PA DOH laboratory. It is expected that hospital and commercial labs will have this capability soon as well.

County health officials are working with healthcare providers and PA DOH to determine on a case-by-case basis whether testing is appropriate. This is done in the interest of not depleting resources by testing every person who has a respiratory illness.

Much remains unknown about COVID-19, including fatality rates. Early indications are that children are at much lower risk of severe illness from COVID-19, and, as with influenza, the elderly and those with immunosuppressive conditions are at higher risk of severe illness.

Current reports of fatality rates are most likely overestimates, Damsker said, given that most of those infected have had either asymptomatic or mild infections.

“While that is indeed good news, the other side of the coin is that the virus becomes easier to spread unnoticed in the community by these mildly symptomatic or asymptomatic people,” Damsker said.

“We want people in Bucks County to be aware of the situation, but not panicked,” Damsker added. “We want our residents to continue taking all of the common-sense approaches that we take with influenza, with respect to handwashing often, not touching your face, avoiding sick people and not going to work when sick. Please perform these steps both at home and at work.

Because there is currently no medication or vaccine for COVID-19, Damsker said, “these simple preventive actions are the most effective tools we have to prevent the spread.”

Please continue to refer to trusted, credible sources of accurate and up-to-date information, including:

- CDC: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- PA DOH: <https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/disease/Pages/Coronavirus.aspx>