Tips for Head Start Programs to Plan and Prepare for COVID-19
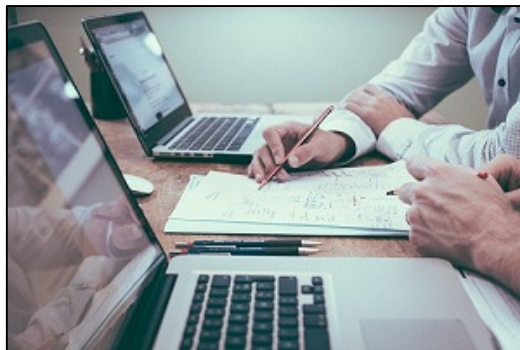
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To prepare for possible community transmission of COVID-19, the most important thing for Head Start programs to do now is **plan and prepare**. As the global outbreak evolves, early childhood education programs should prepare for the possibility of community-level outbreaks. Head Start wants to **be ready** if COVID-19 does appear in their communities.

Task 1: Develop information-sharing systems with partners.

Attendance reporting system should be observed and information such as changes in absenteeism, should be shared with HSAC and possibly local health officials.

Task 2: Monitor and plan for absenteeism.

Review the usual absenteeism patterns at your school among both students and staff. Alert local health officials about large increases in student and staff absenteeism, particularly if absences appear due to respiratory illnesses (like the common cold or the "flu," which have symptoms similar to symptoms of COVID-19). Discourage the use of perfect attendance awards and incentives.

Task 3: Establish procedures for students and staff who are sick at school.

Establish procedures to ensure students and staff who become sick at school or arrive at school sick are sent home as soon as possible. Keep sick students and staff separate from well students and staff until they can leave. Remember that Head Start programs and their child care partners are not expected to screen students or staff to identify cases of COVID-19. The majority of respiratory illnesses are not COVID-19. If a community (or more specifically, a school) has cases of COVID-19, local health officials will help identify those individuals and will follow up on next steps. Share resources with the Head Start and Child Care community to help families understand when to keep children home.

Tips for Head Start Programs to Plan and Prepare for COVID-19, *continued*

Task 4: Perform routine environmental cleaning.

Routinely clean frequently touched surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, light switches, countertops) with the cleaners typically used. Use all cleaning products according to the directions on the label. Provide disposable wipes so that commonly used surfaces (e.g., keyboards, desks, remote controls) can be wiped down by students and staff before each use. Please refer to the CDC's How To Clean and Disinfect Schools at: https://www.cdc.gov/flu/school/cleaning.htm https://nrckids.org/files/appendix/AppendixK.pdf

Task 5: Create communications plans for use with the school community.

Include strategies for sharing information with staff, students, and their families while maintaining confidentiality around Personally Identifiable Information (PII). Include information about steps being taken by the school or childcare facility to prepare, and how additional information will be shared.

 The goals are to work proactively to develop and plan for your program/agency, and to not instill panic but use current research-based information available from reliable sources.

Adapted from: https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/guidance-for-schools.html

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