

Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention

# COVID-19 Guidance for Educational Settings

May 2020



# Background

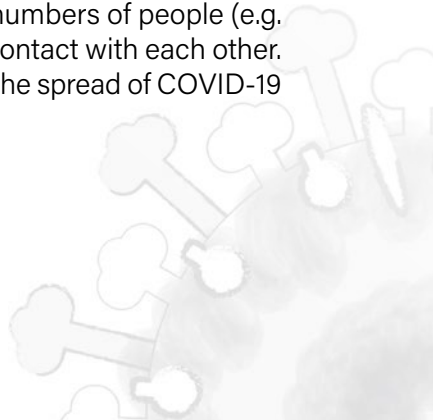
- This guidance will assist staff, students and caregivers in schools (including day care centres, pre-school, primary and secondary schools), higher educational institutions (including universities, research institutes) and other educational institutions with how to address coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) during different outbreak phases as defined in the Africa CDC Stepwise Response.<sup>1</sup>
- This guidance complements the Africa CDC Guidance for Community Physical Distancing<sup>2</sup>, which includes further details on how to engage communities, implement physical distancing, and support organisations, and the Africa CDC Guidance for Community Use of Face Masks.<sup>3</sup>
- COVID-19 can spread from person to person through small droplets from the nose or mouth which are released when an infected person coughs or exhales. These droplets land on objects and surfaces around the person. People can catch COVID-19 if they breathe in droplets from an infected person or by touching these objects or surfaces, then touching their eyes, nose or mouth.
- People living with or working closely with a person who is ill with COVID-19 are at highest risk of getting infected. After a person has been infected, it may take 2–14 days until they develop any symptoms.
- Educational settings may enable the spread of COVID-19 by providing confined spaces where large numbers of people (e.g. students and staff) are in close, regular contact with each other. Educational institutions can help reduce the spread of COVID-19 by taking the steps described below.

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1 <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>

2 <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>

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# Recommendations

## All outbreak stages (Phase 0-4)



Educate students and staff about COVID-19 including: what are the symptoms, how to protect yourself and others and what to do if they are unwell, and address any rumours or misinformation.



Provide hand washing facilities with soap and water (e.g. bucket with tap/tippy tap) and where possible also provide alcohol-based hand sanitisers. Ensure that all staff, students and any visitors wash their hands before entering the school facility and regularly throughout the day.



Encourage staff, students and caregivers to cough or sneeze into a tissue or bent elbow and avoid touching eyes, nose and mouth.



Remind staff, students and caregivers that they should not attend the facility if they are unwell (e.g. symptoms of COVID-19), even if these symptoms are mild.



Ensure procedures are in place in case someone becomes unwell with symptoms of COVID-19 while at the facility, including:



a place for the individual to be apart from other staff and students;



use of a medical mask to prevent spread from the infected person (see Africa CDC Guidance for Community Use of Face Masks);



who to call for information and advice and how to safely access medical services;



how to decontaminate areas where the individual has been; and



what information to give to other students, staff and caregivers.



Frequently clean and disinfect objects and surfaces that are touched regularly, using standard cleaning products.



Use posters and regular announcements to reinforce key messages.



Update contact lists and test communication channels between school and staff/students (e.g. text message / email).

## Early stage and expanding outbreak (Phase 1-2)

In addition to the above measures:

- Encourage staff, students and caregivers to maintain at least one metre distance at all times, to use non-contact greetings and avoid all physical contact.
- Create space for desks to be at least one metre apart.
- If possible, keep windows open throughout the education facility. Consider holding lessons outdoors if the weather is suitable.
- Stop any sport or recreational activity that involves close physical contact.
- Implement safe distancing measures where students or staff are likely to crowd (e.g. mark one metre gaps on the floor with chalk/markers to encourage safe distancing in queues, assemblies and dining halls).
- Consider stopping communal transport if this is organised by the school (e.g. minivan or bus). Where communal transport is necessary, maintain one metre distance between passengers and

if possible, keep windows open (see Africa CDC transportation guidance for further details)

- Stop any non-essential group sessions (e.g. clubs or activities before or after school).
- Consider staggering the beginning and the end of the school day to reduce crowding.
- Stop communal eating or stagger meal times and ensure students maintain one metre distance while queuing and eating. Ensure safety of food services, with strict respiratory hygiene among food service staff and regular cleaning and sanitisation of food utensils.
- Consider the use of face masks, especially where physical distance cannot be maintained; see Africa CDC Guidance for Community Use of Face Masks.<sup>4</sup>
- Prepare for possible closure of educational institutions and alert staff, students and caregivers to this possibility.
  - If possible, disseminate learning resources, such as pens, paper, books, for students and staff in case of sudden school closure.
  - Explore possibility for online platforms for home learning and identify possible partners to assist with this.
  - Explore methods of keeping contact with students and providing welfare support in case of full closure (e.g. social media groups, online lessons).
  - Prepare for continuity of critical services that may take place in schools, such as health screening, feeding programmes, or medical treatment programmes.
  - Any confirmed case of COVID-19 in an individual who attended an educational institution while potentially infectious should prompt an investigation by public health authorities and consideration of temporary closure of that institution.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://africacdc.org/covid-19/covid-19-resources/>

## **Advancing and large outbreak with nationwide transmission (Phase 3–4)**

- Consider temporary closure of education facilities in affected communities or nationwide.
- Encourage students to not congregate outside school.
- Ensure only essential visits to the education facility (for example, to collect essential personal items).
- Support online and distance learning possibilities planned to the extent possible. Maintain contact with students using social media and messaging groups.
- Continue to reinforce messages about COVID-19 including: what are the symptoms, how to protect yourself and others and what to do if you are unwell, and address rumours and misinformation.







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