

Parents,

Mercer County ESC School Districts and the Mercer County Health District have been monitoring the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak situation since it began more than a month ago. COVID-19 is a new type of coronavirus that can cause fever, cough, and shortness of breath, much like influenza (flu). Unlike flu, we do not know how quickly or easily this virus is going to spread, and there is currently no vaccine for the virus. You may find the following resources useful if you would like more information on COVID-19:

- <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov>
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/>
- Ohio Department of Health COVID-19 Hotline: 1-833-427-5634

Actions taken locally are currently aimed at containment, or delaying the entry of COVID-19 into our community. This is done by restricting large indoor gatherings, as well as encouraging people who are experiencing flu-like symptoms to stay home. As the situation continues to change, it may become necessary to close local schools. When the time comes to do this, it will be done in response to a directive issued by our state officials.

Public health containment efforts are aimed at slowing the spread of the disease so that local and regional health care capacity is not overwhelmed. This will help to ensure that people who are infected with COVID-19 receive the level of care they need. Unfortunately, the best containment efforts will not keep the virus out of our community indefinitely. There may eventually be a time when the virus circulates freely in our county, and it will no longer be feasible to identify all cases of COVID-19. The same preventive actions taken now will continue to be important with widespread disease. These include:

- Avoid close contact (within 6 feet) with others, including large crowds.
- Frequently wash your hands for 20 seconds or more with soapy water. If unavailable, use alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home while you are sick (except to visit a health care professional)
- If you need to see a healthcare provider, call ahead before going.
- Cover your mouth/nose with a tissue or sleeve when coughing or sneezing.
- Get adequate sleep and eat well-balanced meals to ensure a healthy immune system.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

Because long-term school closure is possible, school districts are working together to plan an effective transition from traditional education to remote learning. This means that tools traditionally reserved for weather closures such as online education and “blizzard bags” may become the primary means of education.

Regardless of the tools used, an emphasis is being placed on meaningful, quality education. More information will be shared as it is available. Mercer County ESC School Districts and Mercer County Health District remain committed to the health, well-being, and education of your children.