

March 17, 2020

The Diocese of Arlington Office of Catholic Schools continues to work with Local Health Departments and is closely monitoring the health crisis in China and globally associated with novel coronavirus infections (COVID-19).

Diocesan Catholic schools have canceled all school-sponsored international travel through June 30, 2020. All domestic overnight travel from March 11 through May 1, 2020, is canceled. With regard to school closures, schools are following Governor Ralph Northam's [directive](#) to close for the following two weeks. Those closures are in effect through Friday, March 27. Some counties have announced closures that extend beyond the Governor's mandate, and our schools will follow the dates of closure in the jurisdiction they normally follow for weather related closures. Additionally, some counties have imposed building access restrictions and Diocesan schools in those jurisdictions are following that guidance. Schools are now implementing eLearning models to ensure continuity of learning during this period when the physical schools are closed.

Diocesan schools will observe the Easter Break as scheduled on the school calendar.

Here is what we know:

Governor Ralph Northam has declared a state of emergency as the coronavirus continues to spread throughout the state of Virginia.

What measures can I take to decrease my risk of infection:

To lower the risk of respiratory germ spread, including COVID-19, the Virginia Department of Health encourages the following effective behaviors:

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer only if soap and water are not

available.

- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a tissue or your sleeve (not your hands) when coughing or sneezing.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Avoid contact with sick people.
- Avoid non-essential travel.

In addition, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has encouraged Americans to practice "social distancing" measures in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19 through U.S. communities.

The CDC defines social distancing as it applies to COVID-19 as "remaining out of congregate settings, avoiding mass gatherings, and maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet or 2 meters) from others when possible."

No hugs, no handshakes!

It's particularly important-and perhaps obvious-to maintain that same 6-foot distance from anyone who is demonstrating signs of illness, including coughing, sneezing, or fever.

Along with physical distance, proper hand-washing is important for protecting not only yourself but others around you-because the virus can be spread even without symptoms. It is recommended to wash your hands any time you enter from outdoors to indoors, before you eat, and before you spend time with people who are more vulnerable to the effects of COVID-19, including older adults and those with serious chronic medical conditions. [Click here to view CDC guidance on proper hand-washing techniques.](#)

With COVID-19, the goal of social distancing right now is to slow down the outbreak in order to reduce the chance of infection among high-risk populations and to reduce the burden on health care systems and workers. Experts describe this as "flattening the curve," which generally refers to the potential success of social distancing measures to prevent surges in illness that could overwhelm health care systems.'

How can I take care of my own and my loved one's mental health when faced with uncertainty and a constantly evolving situation?

[Click here for some tips!](#)

Where can I find reputable information regarding COVID-19 in Virginia:

For more information, the [Virginia Department of Health's coronavirus website](#) shows the number of test results and those being monitored for the illness in Virginia. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has also provided a [coronavirus disease situation summary](#).

Where can I find current travel guidance:

The CDC maintains a [travel information website](#).

It is strongly recommended not traveling to locations with [CDC](#) or [State Department Level 3](#) alerts or higher.

Consider Enrollment in the State Department's Smart Traveler Enrollment Program, or [STEP](#), to receive current embassy alerts and messages for your destinations.

We thank you for your assistance in helping to prepare for and respond to COVID-19.

The primary goal of this newsletter is information sharing among professionals regarding health issues that may impact our communities.

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