

*March 24, 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).

With regard to school closures, all K-12 schools are following Governor Ralph Northam's [directive](#) to close for "at least" the end of this academic year. He said this "does apply to private schools in Virginia." Additionally, Governor Northam is urging all Virginians to avoid non-essential travel outside the home, if and when possible, and all gatherings of more than 10 people are banned. This closure includes the cancellation of all extra-curricular activities, field trips, and domestic and international trips through at least the end of this school year.

This order goes into effect at 11:59 PM on Tuesday, March 24, 2020 and will remain in place until 11:59 PM on Thursday, April 23, 2020.

Diocesan schools have implemented and will continue using 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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