



Sisters School District

“Home of the Outlaws”

Curtiss Scholl
Superintendent

March 24, 2020

Dear Sisters Schools Community,

This last two weeks has been whirlwind, with long days and sleepless nights for all of us. I share our community's heartbreak for all who are being negatively impacted worldwide by the COVID-19 virus, especially those who are experiencing the loss of a loved one, loss of a job, or food and housing insecurity. We are so grateful to all of the medical providers and their families. As a Sisters School District parent and as the Superintendent, I also know how hard this is on our children and how many questions we have as parents.

Governor Brown issued a new executive order yesterday that expanded business closures and demanding that “non-essential” workers stay at home. As a reminder, Sisters School District staff are out of the buildings for spring break as we do our part to combat community spread of this virus. As we return to work, our first priority is to do our part to keep everyone safe and follow the guidelines set out by Governor Brown.

As a district, our next priority is providing food for our students and families that need support. We will also be working to provide supplemental educational distance learning supports for our students. Again, this work is supplemental. For students who complete the supplemental work, teachers will provide appropriate feedback. Students who are not able to access or complete work will be provided time to do so once in-person classes resume, if the supplemental work will be factored into students’ class work. Finally, we will work with our staff and other local agencies to provide childcare for essential workers as defined by Governor Brown.

In addition to the concerns around containing the spread of this virus, we are also very concerned about the impact of the stressors of this crisis and “social distancing” and how they are weighing on our community’s mental health. Below are some regional mental health support Question and Answers that our colleagues in Bend have shared with their community:

Q: Can you provide some tips for maintaining mental and emotional health during this crisis?

A: Health officials acknowledge that feelings of anxiety and stress are normal during times like these. Social distancing is critical to physical health, both for individuals and to protect the health of our community and our frontline responders. But mental health professionals suggest that it’s important to continue to make safe social connections at this time. Safe connections might include: regular phone calls, group texts, FaceTime, email, going on walks with household family members, time with a family pet and more.

Q: Who can I call for help?

A: If you or your children are in need of free mental health support, you can call the COVID-19 info line at 541-699-5109 to request to be connected with resources, Monday to Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You can also call the Deschutes County Crisis Line 541-322-7500 ext. 9 and/or visit the Deschutes County walk-in center at 2577 NE Courtney, Bend, Monday to Friday from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Q: Do you have tips for managing stress and anxiety?

A: Our partners at Deschutes County Behavioral Health offered the following tips:

- Take care of yourself: Get enough sleep, eat healthy, exercise.
- Talk to others: Feelings of anxiety are normal in a situation like this. Reach out and talk to people in your community who can provide support. Avoid rumors and inaccurate information: Rely on official sources for information, including
 - Deschutes County for countywide updates: <https://www.deschutes.org/health/page/covid-19-novel-coronavirus>;
 - Oregon Health Authority for statewide updates: <http://www.healthoregon.org/coronavirus>;
 - Centers for Disease Control for nationwide updates: www.cdc.gov/covid19.
- Do what you can: Even when some things are out of our control, there are always things that we as individuals and communities can control:
 - Wash your hands often.
 - Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
 - Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
 - Stay home when you are sick.
 - Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
 - Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.
- Ask for help: Local residents can reach out 24-hours-a-day to area crisis lines: Deschutes County 800-875-7364; Crook County 541-323-5530; and Jefferson County 541-475-4822.
- Seek help if you are struggling with persistent inability to sleep, increasing drug or alcohol use, an overwhelming sense of depression or panic, urges to harm yourself or others, or an inability to take care of yourself or those who depend on you. Please do not call 911 unless you are experiencing a medical emergency. Instead, call a crisis line or the nonemergency COVID-19 info line at 541-699-5109.
- Reminder: Taking precautions is altruistic. When we remind ourselves that others are benefitting from our actions, it makes sacrifices easier to bear. By staying home and taking precautions, we are helping to keep vulnerable populations safe and supporting our frontline responders.

Q: How about tips for parents?

A: Our partners at Deschutes County Behavioral Health offered the following tips:

- Remain calm and reassuring: If true, emphasize to your children that they and your family are fine.
- Make yourself available: Let your children talk and give them plenty of time and attention.
- Talk to children in language they can understand: The CDC suggests telling children that, from what doctors have seen so far, most kids aren't getting very sick. In fact, most people who have gotten COVID-19 haven't gotten very sick. Only a small group have had serious problems. Keep the conversation going. Make time to check in regularly as the situation develops. Take cues from your child if they become afraid or overwhelmed offer comfort. If you need help, seek professional health.
- Avoid language that stigmatizes or assigns blame: Remind children that viruses can make anyone sick, regardless of a person's race, ethnicity or national origin.
- Monitor television viewing and social media: Try to limit children's exposure to media and talk about what they are seeing. Use only reliable sources of information.
- Maintain healthy behaviors and household routines: Serve nutritious meals, encourage adequate sleep and exercise, and maintain household routines to the extent possible.

- Teach strategies to prevent infection: Remind children to wash their hands with soap and water for 20 seconds (or the length of two “Happy Birthday” songs) when they come in from outside, before they eat, and after blowing their nose, coughing, sneezing or using the bathroom.
- Find more info: <http://bit.ly/COVID19-TipsForParents>

Access to accurate, timely information about COVID-19 is critical for all of us. Our [County Public Health](#) experts point to the [Oregon Health Authority](#) and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) as good sources of information. www.coemergencyinfo.blogspot.com provides a collective resource for up-to-date information. Oregon Department of Education has an FAQ page at: <https://www.oregon.gov/ode/students-and-family/healthsafety/Pages/COVID-19-FAQ.aspx>

Stay Safe,

Curt Scholl
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