



# AVOCA

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Central School District



Stephen Saxton, Superintendent  
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March 13, 2020

Dear Parents and Guardians:

With the recent outbreak of novel Coronavirus (COVID-19), there have understandably been many questions and concerns about the potential impact on our school community. Although the situation is seemingly changing on an almost hourly basis, I wanted to take the opportunity to share with you some steps the district has already taken in connection with the outbreak and try to answer some of the questions I know are being asked.

In response to communications we have had with the Steuben County Public Health Department and information we have received from Governor Cuomo's office, we will be taking a number of actions here at school to help keep our students and community safe. Beginning immediately and continuing through our return to school after spring break on Monday, April 13<sup>th</sup>, we will be taking the following precautions:

- All field trips will be canceled or postponed. Whenever possible, we will attempt to reschedule these field trips for a later point in time.
- Staff will not be permitted to attend any professional development, such as conferences, that occur outside of our building.
- All evening activities, including parent/community group events and evening programs for students, will be canceled or postponed. As with field trips, we will attempt to reschedule these events for a later point in time.
- We have reviewed our cleaning procedures and increased the hours of our maintenance staff to allow for more extensive cleaning and disinfecting of the school facilities.

Additionally, I would also like to take this opportunity to address some of the questions being asked by members of the school community:

- ***Will the school be closed?***

Per guidance issued by the New York State Education Department, any school determined to have a positive case of COVID-19 must close for a minimum of 24 hours to permit the school to consult with Department of Health officials. It would be determined during that consultation what, if any, further closure might be necessary. Additionally, we would certainly comply with any large scale closing directed by the governor or other NYS official.

- ***If colleges are closing, why aren't public schools closing?***

Colleges have large numbers of individuals living in very close quarters that do not receive regular and thorough cleanings. Public schools have the opportunity to perform thorough cleanings on a daily basis.

- ***If the school were to close, what educational opportunities would be offered to our students?***

While many colleges and public schools have been quick to suggest that online instruction could serve as an easy replacement for traditional classroom instruction, I believe these individuals have underestimated the logistics involved with instituting this on a district-wide scale. Although we would certainly attempt to move to some form of online instruction in the event of an extended school closure, this transition would take a period of time to fully implement. We have, however, begun necessary planning in an attempt to keep the transition period as short as possible.

In addition to the above information, attached is some additional guidance issued by the Steuben County Public Health department.

As you are all aware, this is a rapidly-evolving and unprecedented situation that will require us to make adjustments on a regular basis. I can assure you that your childrens' health and safety will remain our highest priorities, and those priorities will continue to guide our decision-making process. Should you have any further questions or concerns, I encourage you to contact my office.

Sincerely,



Stephen Saxton  
Superintendent of School



## Steuben County Public Health

3 East Pulteney Square, Bath, NY 14810  
607-664-2438 or 1-800-724-0471  
Fax: 607-664-2166



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 12, 2020

CONTACT: Steuben County Public Health Director Darlene Smith (607) 664-2438

*Steuben Public Health strongly recommends immediate actions to slow COVID-19 spread*

BATH – With the World Health Organization (WHO) recognizing COVID-19 reaching pandemic levels, Steuben County Public Health Department urges residents to take immediate precautions to limit the spread of disease.

Although there are currently no Steuben County cases of COVID-19, Public Health officials and County management are taking steps to limit the potential spread of the disease. Mass gatherings and social events are being limited, postponed, or canceled to ensure that potential exposure and spread of COVID-19 does not occur. Organizations that have planned mass gathering events in the coming weeks should strongly consider immediate cancelation or postponement.

“We will not be surprised to see COVID-19 reaching Steuben County as it continues to spread across the country, but we are hoping to limit the harm of the disease by taking action early to limit contact,” stated County Public Health Director, Darlene Smith.

Effective March 13, all congregate meal sites in Steuben County are closed. Meals on Wheels will deliver those meals to individuals at their homes. The senior population and those with underlying health issues are the most at risk for developing severe cases of COVID-19 if they are exposed, and are strongly urged to reconsider attending public gatherings.

Governor Cuomo announced a statewide ban of gatherings of more than 500 people, effective March 13 at 5:00 pm. For gatherings under 500 people, there is a mandate to reduce the seating capacity by half.

Updates on other closures in the county will be available on Steuben County’s website at [www.steubencony.org](http://www.steubencony.org).

“Practicing everyday health habits is still one of our best lines of defense against COVID-19 and other illnesses,” Smith said. “Regularly wash hands for at least 20 seconds, don’t touch your face with unwashed hands where viruses can enter through the nose, mouth and eyes, disinfect high touch surfaces often, stay home when sick and avoid others who are sick.”

The County Public Health Department continues to work closely with the New York State Department of Health and CDC to monitor individuals who could have been exposed to COVID-19 per established guidelines.

The New York State Department of Health has a call in hotline for coronavirus questions that can be reached by calling 1-888-364-3065 and is available 24/7.