

Opportunities for Chenango Head Start/Early Head Start

March 3, 2020

Dear Parent/Guardian:

While our region does not have confirmed cases of COVID-19, caused by the novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) in our schools, we are aware of concerns in the community about the spread of this relatively new virus.

Head Start is closely monitoring this changing situation and following guidance from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH), the Chenango County Department of Health, the Office of Children and Family Services (OCFS) and Head Start Regional Offices.

Based on recent reports, COVID-19 is not actively circulating in New York State at this time. If Head Start becomes aware that an enrolled child or staff member is diagnosed with COVID-19, it will immediately notify staff and parents/guardians. If an enrolled child or staff shows respiratory symptoms, we will follow our current practices for handling respiratory illnesses, subject to any additional guidance forthcoming.

Head Start has infectious disease protocols in place and has been taking steps, such as cleaning and disinfecting throughout the centers, to minimize the spread of viruses and a variety of other illnesses.

There are a number of steps that children, families, staff and community members can take to minimize the spread of all respiratory illnesses, including COVID-19, according to the state Department of Health.

- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer. Heavily soiled hands should be washed.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- 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.

While the flu and COVID-19 share many of the same symptoms, much is still unknown about the disease. Research indicates that COVID-19 has the ability to spread via air droplets after an infected person has left the area. The same precautions used to prevent the spread of flu should be used to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

If you or a family member begin showing symptoms of a respiratory disease and suspect it may be COVID-19, contact your healthcare provider. Before going to your healthcare provider's office, inform them that a case of COVID-19 is suspected, and follow their advice. Local health departments will contact schools/daycares if a suspected or known COVID-19 case emerges. Head Start is prepared to work with any affected families.

Please know that the health and safety of our children and staff is our highest priority, and we will remain vigilant in our efforts to help prevent the spread of this virus.

Families are also encouraged to follow the CDC's information for travel, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>.

In addition, New York has established a Novel Coronavirus Hotline, which can provide additional information. Call 1-888-364-3065 with questions or concerns about travel and symptoms.

Sincerely,

Kelly Ingham, RN, BSN
Health Services Coordinator