Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in School Settings

December 2, 2020
Responding to COVID-19 Cases

1. School notified of a suspected case

2. School contacts Local Health Department

3. Local Health Department determines if there is a positive case

4. Local Health Department works with School to do contact tracing

5. Local Health Department & County Superintendent make one of the following determinations:
   - School goes into remote learning while contact tracing is occurring and building is being cleaned
   - Specific individuals are required to quarantine by the Local Health Department
   - Local Health Department, with county office, determines a Classroom needs to quarantine
   - Local Health Department, with county office, determines a School needs to go into remote learning for 14 days because of outbreak
Outbreak Trends in School Settings

- 111 outbreaks in K-12 schools have been reported since August
- Total of 478 confirmed cases reported from 41 counties
  - Range 2-24 cases per outbreak
  - Median 4 cases
  - 223 (47%) students and 255 (53%) staff
Confirmed Outbreaks in School Settings by Month, N=111

- August: 5
- September: 25
- October: 37
- November: 44
# Types of Schools, N=111

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of School</th>
<th>Number of Outbreaks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Elementary</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-12</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-8</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K-7</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-K</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle/High</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical/Vocational</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus Garage</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Who Was Impacted, N=111

- **39 (35%) outbreaks involved in staff only**
  - Result of in-person meetings, congregating in break rooms, cafeteria staff, bus drivers, close contact among teachers especially those who co-teach
- **28 (25%) outbreaks involved students only**
  - 10 being associated with sports teams
  - 11 outbreaks index case was identified a close contact to a confirmed case or associated with a community outbreak
  - 7 outbreaks among students' transmission occurred by bus, classroom, or associated extracurricular activities
- **44 (40%) outbreaks involved students and staff**
• 23 (21%) outbreaks occurred among sports teams
  • football (8), volleyball (8), other (7)
• 33 (30%) outbreaks were a result of students or staff becoming infected through close contact with a case or being associated with an outbreak in the community
• 55 (49%) outbreaks transmission in school setting
  • 27 outbreaks occurred among teachers only or as a result of staff not following social distancing best practices (in person meetings eating together, or social gatherings)
  • 13 outbreaks occurred in special educational classrooms or other classroom settings where activities increased likelihood for transmission (dual teachers, music, health)
  • 5 outbreaks resulted in only a single student and teacher developing illness
  • 10 outbreaks transmission was not documented
Best Practices

• Cloth face coverings are one of the best preventative measures to reduce transmission
• Reinforce social distancing in settings both inside and outside the classroom
• Limit opportunities for exposure among staff by reducing face-to-face contact
  • Break rooms, in-person meetings, congregating for lunch, social gatherings, visiting other classrooms
• Be self aware that actions taken outside of the classroom have a direct impact on the health and safety of students inside the classroom
• Cohorting students limits transmission – have assigned seating
• Promote social distancing and eliminate large gatherings
CDC Says Schools Should Remain Open

• Schools are safe and should remain open, despite increased transmission in the community
• Schools do not pose a threat of spreading the virus and are among the safest places where children can be
• No data has been shown nationwide that the virus is being spread in the school setting as long as masking and social distancing guidelines are followed
• Extensive data collected from across the county over the past 3 months confirm that schools can operate face-to-face learning and they can do it safely
• Research indicates districts that close schools attempting to curb community transmission have higher rates of transmission than those districts that have remained open-masking and social distancing works

Data from 191 countries shows no consistent link between reopening schools and increased rates of COVID-19.

There is strong evidence that, with basic safety measures in place, the net benefits of keeping schools open outweigh the costs of closing them.

Schools are not a main driver of community transmission, and children are more likely to get the virus outside of school settings.

Child-to-child transmission of the coronavirus in schools was “uncommon and not the primary cause” of infections among children who caught the virus while attending school.

Source: https://www.unicef.org/reports/averting-lost-generation-covid19-world-childrens-day-2020-brief
Conclusion

• To date, limited transmission in schools in West Virginia has been observed
• Greatest risk for transmission appears to be among older children, aged 12-17 years
• Much of the data indicates that virus is being acquired outside of the educational setting or in situations where guidance is not being followed
• Schools and local health departments have worked diligently to implement protective measures to reduce transmission in the school setting
• As we see increased community transmission, it is crucial that schools continue to layer prevention strategies to reduce COVID-19 disease risk for students, teachers, school staff, and families