

## EV-W SCHOOLS EVENTS

The most up-to-date information about EV-W events can be found at [centralmnconference.org/public/genie/35/school/7/](http://centralmnconference.org/public/genie/35/school/7/).

### Saturday, March 14

Speech – at Milaca – CANCELLED

### Monday, March 16

Elementary Concert – CANCELLED

Grade 7-10 Baseball Parent Meeting – POSTPONED

### Tuesday, March 17

Speech – CMC Meet at Paynesville – POSTPONED

### Friday, March 20

Track – CMC Indoor Meet at SCSU – CANCELLED

### Saturday, March 21

Speech at Melrose – CANCELLED

## EVW SCHOOLS – from Page 1

Administrators set a framework for short- and long-term action to comply with the mandates of the governor's office, as well as the Minnesota Department of Education, Minnesota Department of Health, and Centers for Disease Control.

Walz's announcement on Sunday, March 15, will close schools for at least eight days, with the intention of giving educators the time needed to prepare electronic, remote-learning materials to continue education in the event of further in-person school closures after Friday, March 27, to mitigate the person-to-person spread of the COVID-19 coronavirus and protect at-risk staff and students.

In line with other districts around the region and state, EV-W stayed open to students on Monday, March 16, closing on Tuesday, March 17, to allow teachers to begin remote-learning lesson planning.

Likewise, as mandated by the Minnesota State High School League, EV-W and other schools around the state will suspend group practices and competitions during the school-closure period.

On Monday, March 16, students were instructed to collect any medications from the school office and to bring home items from their lockers so that maintenance and janitorial staff could fully disinfect the facilities during the break. On their single day at school, students were also instructed to take home a district Chromebook if necessary to ease the possible transition into long-term e-learning from home.

While schools are closed statewide, the governor's office and both houses of the Minnesota Legislature have indicated their support for ensuring as much stability as possible during the closure, suggesting salary continuity for teachers and support staff. Similarly, the district will continue to provide free lunch to any student or family who requests it by setting up food-distribution locations and delivering meals. The district will be looking for recommendations from staff and sending a parent survey to determine meal/nutrition needs.

Drop-off food sites – beginning Wednesday, March 18, from 11 to 11:30 a.m. – are planned at: EV-W High School Door #12; Watkins Elementary Door #1; the Church of Our Lady parking lot in Manannah; and the St. Nicholas Catholic Church parking lot. Soon, the district hopes to establish a door-to-door delivery route.

The district will also release more information in the future about childcare. As mandated by the state, the school will provide childcare to families of health care providers, but for other families, the district asks parents to find alternative options within the family or community to prevent an overload and to reduce the risk of infection by proximity. (Lil' Eagle childcare, operated by the district, will stay open.)

With turbulent external forces and information reaching the general public as quickly as it does the district, administrators ask that students, parents, and community members closely follow district-wide SwiftReach announcements and communicate with the schools through offices and secretaries rather than directly communicating with the superintendent and other administrators on non-essential issues.

District administrators also acknowledged that compromise and flexibility will be necessary for the district to continue educating students for the remainder of the year, and up-to-date information regarding the district's COVID-19 response can be found on their website ([www.ev.wk12.mn.us](http://www.ev.wk12.mn.us)) under "News."

"I thank you all for your understanding, support, insight, and guidance for this outstanding district," Messman concluded.

In addition to Messman, the following school officials were present at Sunday's meeting: Rob Flaschenriem, school board chair; Sarah Kuechle, school board vice chair; Ann Lemke, school board member; Cathy Wuertz, district business manager; Bruce Kiehn, secondary school principal; Rob Pederson, elementary school principal; Dave Schneider, athletic director and dean of students; Sarah Michaelson, curriculum director; Denise DeJulianne, district technology director; Ralph Lambert, custodial/facility manager; Jessica Heying, food service director; Julie Bulau, district social media coordinator and social studies teacher; Kris Latcham, Community Education director and choir teacher; and Anno Johnson, district nurse.

The EV-W School Board is scheduled to hold its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, March 18, at 6:30 p.m.

## Stearns County establishes Covid-19 hotline for questions

**Monday, March 16:** A local hotline has been set up to answer questions related to the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Stearns and Benton counties established a joint hotline staffed by public health professionals. That hotline number is 320-656-6625 or 1-877-782-5683 and is answered from 8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Mondays through Fridays.

Individuals can also call the Minnesota Department of Health hotline, which is staffed 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. seven days a week, at 651-201-3920 or 1-800-657-3903.

Meanwhile, Stearns County Public Health is asking every Stearns County resident to do their part to help fight the spread of COVID-19. "We need everyone to follow the CDC and MDH recommended guidelines to help us manage the spread of the virus," said Renee Frauendienst, Stearns County Public Health Division director. "We cannot do it alone. This is going to take individuals, businesses, community organizations, our faith communities, all of us working together."

Everyone's primary responsibility is to practice social distancing, stay home if they're sick, wash hands, cover coughs, avoid touching the face, clean frequently-touched surfaces often, limit movement in the community, create a household plan of action in case of illness or disruption of activities in the community, and for communities and organizations to make temporary changes to events, operations, activities and identify safe ways to serve those at high risk or vulnerable.

As of Monday, March 16, there are three confirmed cases of Covid-19 in Stearns County. All three cases are travel related, all are self-quaranting, and all are at home recovering.

## COVID-19

# About Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

*Per the Minnesota Department of Health*

### What is coronavirus?

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses. They are estimated to cause about a third of all cases of the common cold. The most common forms can cause mild to moderate illness in people, while other forms circulate among animals, including camels, cats, and bats.

### What is COVID-19?

COVID-19 is a viral respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus that has not been found in people before. COVID-19 is not caused by the same coronavirus that caused Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) in 2003 or Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in 2012. However, it is in the same family of viruses. Because this is a new virus, there are still things we do

not know, such as how severe the illness can be and how well it is transmitted between people.

### What was the source of this outbreak?

Public health officials and partners are working hard to identify the source of the COVID-19 outbreak. Early on, many of the patients in the outbreak in Wuhan, China, reportedly had some link to a large seafood and animal market, suggesting the virus likely emerged from an animal source. SARS, another coronavirus, came from civet cats, while MERS, another coronavirus, came from camels. Health officials are trying to determine if something similar happened with COVID-19.

### What are the symptoms of COVID-19?

According to CDC, patients with confirmed COVID-19 have had mild to

severe respiratory illness with symptoms of fever, cough, and shortness of breath. Some patients have had other symptoms including muscle aches, headache, sore throat, or diarrhea.

Based on what has been seen previously as the incubation period of other coronaviruses, CDC believes that symptoms of COVID-19 may appear 2-14 days after exposure. Symptoms are similar to other respiratory illnesses that are circulating, such as influenza, so experiencing these symptoms does not necessarily mean you need to be tested for COVID-19.

### What can I do to stay healthy?

Take the same precautions recommended for avoiding colds and flu:

- Wash your hands thoroughly with soap and water.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough.

## Governor orders K-12 schools to close starting Wednesday

**Sunday, March 15:** Gov. Tim Walz (DFL-Mankato) signed Executive Order 20-02, authorizing the temporary closure of Minnesota K-12 public schools to students in order for school administrators and teachers to make long-term plans for the continuity of education and essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. Schools will be closed to students by Wednesday, March 18, through Friday, March 27, to accommodate this planning between school staff, teachers, and administrators with guidance from the Minnesota Department of Education and the Minnesota Department of Health.

"My top priority as governor is the safety of Minnesotans. As a former teacher, and father of two teenage kids, I'm especially focused on the safety of our children," said Walz. "I am ordering the temporary closure of schools so educators can make plans to provide a safe learning environment for all Minnesota students during this pandemic. Closing schools is never an easy decision, but we need to make sure we have plans in place to educate and feed our kids regardless of what's to come."

Executive Order 20-02 requires schools to provide care for elementary-age children of health care professionals, first responders, and other emergency workers during previously planned school days to ensure Minnesota's first line of defense against COVID-19 can stay on the job.

The Executive Order also makes provisions for the continuity of mental health services and requires schools to continue providing meals to students in need.

"The safety and well-being of our students is always our top priority," said Minnesota Department of Education commissioner Mary Cathryn Ricker. "That is why we are committed to creating an education delivery model that can sustain learning, no matter the circumstances. Minnesota has long valued education, and we will continue to work with our school leaders to ensure that our students continue to receive the education they need and deserve. Educators are caring, creative people, and I am confident they are going to work to meet the needs of our students in these extraordinary times."

The Governor advises and urges Minnesotans to continue following the Minnesota Department of Health's community mitigation strategies during this temporary closure to prevent the spread of COVID-19 while students are not in school.

## Health officials announce community-level strategies to slow COVID-19 in Minnesota

**Friday, March 13:** The Minnesota Department of Health announced a series of community-level strategies to help slow the spread of novel coronavirus in Minnesota communities. With a total of 14 cases of travel-associated COVID-19 now confirmed in Minnesota (as of Friday, March 13), health officials urge swift action to limit the spread of the infection and reduce its impacts on our communities and our health care system.

The broad set of recommendations will remain in place until further notice, and touch on many aspects of society, including families, faith-based organizations, employers, assisted living facilities, schools, and health care settings. Each strategy is designed to make person-to-person transmission less likely by reducing the close-contact interactions (interactions with others within 6 feet for 10 minutes or more) that tend to result in passing along the illness. The full set of recommendations is available on the Minnesota Department of Health's Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19) website.

Key items on the list include:

- Event organizers should cancel or postpone gatherings with 250 or more people, including concerts, conferences, professional and amateur performances, or sporting events.
- Event organizers should cancel or postpone smaller events (those with less than 250 people) that are held in settings that do not allow social distancing of 6 feet per person.
- Event organizers should limit attendance to no more than 10 people for events where the majority of participants are at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.
- People and families at higher risk of severe COVID-19 illness should stay at home and avoid gatherings or other situations of potential exposures, including travel.
- Employers should make telework arrangements for workers whose duties can be done remotely.
- Employers should stagger work schedules and limit non-essential work travel.
- Health care facilities and assisted-living facilities should more strictly limit visitors.
- Faith-based organizations should offer video or audio.
- Hospitals and other health care facilities should implement triage before entering facilities (for example, parking lot triage, phone triage, and telemedicine to limit unnecessary visits).

The Minnesota recommendations include school-specific guidance for limiting close-contact interactions. However, consistent with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Minnesota Department of Health has not recommended that K-12 schools close unless specifically advised to do so by health officials. However, as the situation evolves there may be points where specific or broad closures would be ordered.

Parents of children and teens with underlying health conditions should consider distance learning as a precaution.

Shopping for groceries and other items is not affected by these recommendations, although it is a good idea to limit close contact when doing so – and people who are sick should not be shopping. They should stay home until they recover.

The recommendations to avoid mass gatherings do not pertain to normal operations of airports, bus and train stations, medical facilities, libraries, shopping malls and centers, or

## First COVID-19 case in Stearns County announced on Thursday

**Thursday, March 12:** The Minnesota Department of Health confirmed a presumptive positive COVID-19 case in Stearns County, a person in their 60s. The individual returned from a Caribbean cruise on Friday, March 6. On Saturday, March 7, they felt sick, stayed home from work, and sought medical care for their symptoms, testing positive for COVID-19.

This person is home and doing well. One other person has been exposed, a household contact. That person is showing no symptoms and chose to self-quarantine at home as well.

At a press conference on Thursday, March 12, health officials affirmed that this is something they've been expecting, planning for, and are now ready to respond to as needed.

In preparation for events such as the COVID-19 outbreak, public health uses four levels of response. The first – containment – focuses on isolation, contact identification, and quarantine. The second phase – community mitigation – considers actions such as school closings, canceling of large community events, and promoting virtual or video faith and other services.

While Minnesota has not, at this time, had any known community transmission of COVID-19 (all so far have been travel-related illnesses), public health will start moving to the "minimal to moderate" level of implementing community mitigation to slow transmission of the disease.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) has mitigation strategy guidelines, including actions for home, schools/childcare sites, assisted living facilities, work places, health care settings, and community and faith-based organizations. The Minnesota Department of Health (MDH) is going through those guidelines and making more specific recommendations for Minnesota.

The Minnesota Department of Health has set up a public hotline that will be open from 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. from Mondays to Fridays. The hotline number is 651-201-3920.

## CentraCare Health limiting visitors at all its locations

**Thursday, March 12:** To protect its patients, families, and health care workers during the outbreak of COVID-19, CentraCare Health will be implementing temporary visitor restrictions to all CentraCare facilities. "Effective immediately, we are no longer allowing visitors at CentraCare hospitals, long-term care facilities, senior housing, and sites where individuals are housed in large numbers. After careful consideration, we made this difficult choice because our top priority must be the safety of our patients, staff, and communities," CentraCare announced on Thursday, March 12.

Visitors impacted by this policy include patient family and friends, students, volunteers, and non-essential contracted vendors. Exceptions will be made for patient family members under special circumstances such as unstable/critically ill patients, parents of minors, and end-of-life patients.

The visitation restrictions apply to all CentraCare locations. This is a rapidly evolving situation and CentraCare will take additional steps to help control the spread of COVID-19, as necessary. "We understand that interacting with friends and family can be helpful to the healing process and strongly encourage patients to connect with family members through other forms of communication, such as phone calls and video chats on cell phones or other mobile devices," said CentraCare.

If you have symptoms of respiratory illness, please call CentraCare Connect at 320-200-3200 to speak with a nurse, 24/7.

## Bishops lift mass obligation due to COVID-19 outbreak

**Friday, March 13:** While masses will continue to be held, bishops have dispensed Catholics from the obligation to attend.

Bishop John M. LeVoi of the Diocese of New Ulm relieved Catholics of their mass obligation for the next three weeks: "Given the rapid spread of the COVID-19/coronavirus and to minimize the risk of contracting or spreading infection, I am dispensing the faithful from the obligation of attending Mass on Saturday evening or Sunday for the next three weekends (March 14/15, March 21/22, and March 28/29) in the Diocese of New Ulm. If the faithful decide that gathering for Sunday Mass would constitute a risk to themselves or others, they have the freedom not to attend. However, masses will continue to be celebrated in parishes in the Diocese of New Ulm as regularly scheduled."

Bishop Donald Kettler of the Diocese of St. Cloud also dispensed with Mass and Lenten obligations for Catholics.

"Effective immediately, all Catholics in the diocese are dispensed from the obligation to attend Sunday Mass, until further notice. Our parishes will continue to celebrate all weekend masses as scheduled at this time; weekday masses will be scheduled at the discretion of the pastor. The Mass is core to our Catholic identity and can be a powerful source of healing for many struggles. However, if you are ill, or if you believe that attending Mass would put you or others at risk, please stay home. Use the time to watch the TV Mass, pray, and reflect on the scriptures of the day."

"If you are ill for any reason, or taking care of someone who is, you are also dispensed from Lenten disciplines and sacrifices. Your illness and the care you are providing to others is your Lenten sacrifice."

"For those who are able to attend Mass, please follow recommended precautions to help minimize the spread of illness: washing hands frequently and for no less than 20 seconds with soap and warm water; using hand sanitizer; covering coughs and sneezes with a tissue, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth."

"Also, in an effort to reduce the possibility of coronavirus transmission, I highly recommend parishes cancel all parish-sponsored events between now and April 1 – i.e. fish fries and breakfasts."