



ALERTS

Coronavirus And COVID-19 Updates For School Employers

March 6, 2020

Although the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is still reporting that the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low in the United States, the Indiana State Department of Health confirmed March 6, 2020, the first case of coronavirus in the state. Gov. Eric Holcomb declared a public health emergency in response.

If local health officials report that there are cases of coronavirus in the community, schools may need to take additional steps in response to prevent spread in the school.

The recommended first step for schools in this situation is to talk with local health officials.

According to the CDC, local health officials' recommendations for the scope (e.g., a single school, a full district) and duration of school dismissals will be made on a case-by-case basis based on the most up-to-date information about coronavirus and the specific cases in the impacted community. To date, at least one school in Seattle, Washington, closed all of its schools beginning March 5, for up to 14 days. That district has 23,577 students, [as reported by NPR](#).

As more cases are reported, the most important thing for schools to do now is plan and prepare, and be purposeful in those efforts to avoid legal hurdles later. In the event of exposure at school, it is critical to comply with reasonable requests from government agencies with proper jurisdiction, and keep employee and student private health information confidential, as required by the Americans with Disabilities Act, the Family Medical Leave Act, and the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act, as well as to consult counsel on the nuances of various federal and state

RELATED PEOPLE



Heather D. Harris

Partner
Indianapolis

P 317-231-6448
F 317-231-7433
heather.harris@btlaw.com



Jason T. Clagg

Partner
Fort Wayne, Columbus

P 260-425-4646
F 260-424-8316
jason.clagg@btlaw.com



Mark D. Scudder

Of Counsel
Fort Wayne

P 260-425-4618
F 260-424-8316
mark.scudder@btlaw.com

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leave requirements. Additionally, schools should review their paid time policies in case of mandated or self-requested quarantines.

[Information on COVID-19](#) is available through the CDC, and, the Indiana Department of Health has [information posted on its website](#).

For more information, please contact the Barnes & Thornburg attorney with whom you work, or Heather Willey at 317-231-6448 or heather.willey@btlaw.com, Jason Clagg at 260-425-4646 or jason.clagg@btlaw.com, Mark Scudder at 260-425-4618 or mark.scudder@btlaw.com, or Taylor Hunter at 317-231-7755 or taylor.hunter@btlaw.com.

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