The ongoing presence of COVID-19 has introduced an essential need for expanded sanitizing protocol in our schools. Cleaning and disinfecting have become a universal responsibility and are no longer limited to only a janitorial function.

Novel coronavirus can survive 2-3 days on plastic and stainless steel surfaces.\(^1\)

Developing a comprehensive cleaning and disinfection program is a critical component to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus among students and staff. A detailed plan should provide specific instruction among four critical components:

- Areas to be cleaned and disinfected
- Frequency of cleaning and disinfection
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)-registered disinfectants to be used
- Material-specific cleaning procedures and techniques

Areas to be cleaned and disinfected

Specific attention for sanitation should be given to a broad spectrum of areas that are part of a school’s operations. Existing cleaning and sanitation protocols may require adaptations to include enhancements along with previously unrealized practices.

Commonly touched or shared objects should be discouraged where possible. Unavoidable areas prone to use, such as door handles, handrails and drinking fountains, should be targeted for enhanced cleaning and disinfection attention. High-risk locations beyond bathrooms include:

- Lunchrooms and cafeterias – tables, chairs, door handles, utensil and condiment areas, trays
- Playground equipment, toys and art supplies – limit stuffed animals and other difficult to clean toys in younger grades; disinfect commonly touched areas of playground equipment such as monkey bars, pull up stations, etc.
- Health office – to include laundering of coverings and any items touched by students or staff
- Library – tables, chairs, book covers, cart handles; consider restricting use of computers and other media
- Locker rooms and athletic rooms – mats, gym equipment and other high use equipment
- School buses and other student transport vehicles – seats and handrails

If facilities are used by outside organizations, the same post-use cleaning policies should be implemented.

Appendix A contains a flowchart developed by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) for guidance to help identify specific areas where enhanced cleaning may be recommended.

Cleaning and disinfection frequency

The cleaning frequency for each area should be covered specifically in the plan and align with the significance of the cleaning and disinfection task. For more routine cleaning, you may consider providing disinfecting wipes to employees and have them available in shared spaces such as conference rooms, group workspaces and the cafeteria.
If a confirmed case of COVID-19 is reported at the school, complete enhanced cleaning and disinfection protocol prior to reoccupying the area.

**Cleaning chemicals and disinfectants**

The viruses associated with COVID-19 can be inactivated by many low- or intermediate-level disinfectants recommended by the EPA.

To reduce the risk of asthma related to the disinfection process, there are products on the EPA list that use asthma-safe ingredients such as hydrogen peroxide, citric acid and lactic acid. Lists of registered disinfectants can be found here.²

**Cleaning procedures**

For personal safety, it is important that all janitorial staff, cleaning providers and staff receive training on the proper use of any chemicals, cleaning agents and cleaning equipment. Training should also include specific processes, requirements for each area and how to address the increased cleaning needs during a virus outbreak.

- Routinely clean and disinfect surfaces, especially those commonly touched, to reduce the concentration of viruses and help prevent further spread. These should include desks, chairs, water faucets, door handles, light switches, buttons on vending machines, shared computer keyboards, mice, etc.
- Plan to conduct thorough cleaning when students are not present, allowing recommended times for airing out the space prior to student arrival
- Establish a plan for adequate outdoor air circulation where feasible, but only if doing so does not present other safety and health risks to students
- Use filters rated MERV 13 or higher to help maximize HVAC filtration systems
- Prior to reoccupying the space after prolonged shutdown, check that all water systems and features are safe to use. A buildup of bacteria from stagnant water within the water system can increase the risk to Legionnaires’ disease
- Buses and other school transport vehicles should have established cleaning and disinfection protocols that include commonly touched surfaces
- Schools should build up an inventory of disinfectants, wipes, spray bottles, paper towels, hand sanitizer, dispensers, cleaning tools and other essential supplies for keeping surfaces clean and germ-free
- Follow label directions for all Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) registered disinfectants

**References**

Appendix A

CDC guidance for disinfecting

**MAKING YOUR PLAN TO CLEAN AND DISINFECT**

Cleaning with soap and water removes germs, dirt, and impurities from surface. It lowers the risk of spreading infection.

Disinfecting kills germs on surfaces. By killing germs on a surface after cleaning, it can further lower the risk of spreading infection.

Is the area indoors?

- **YES**
  - It is an indoor area.

- **NO**
  - Maintain existing cleaning practices. Coronavirus naturally die in hours to days in typical indoor and outdoor environments. Viruses are killed more quickly by warmer temperatures and sunlight.

Has the area been occupied within the last 7 days?

- **YES**
  - Yes, the area has been occupied within the last 7 days.
  - The area will need only routine cleaning.

- **NO**
  - The area has been unoccupied within the last 7 days.
  - Thoroughly clean those materials. Consider setting a schedule for routine cleaning and disinfection, as appropriate.

Is it a frequently touched surface or object?

- **YES**
  - Yes, it is a frequently touched surface or object.
  - Hard and non-porous materials like glass, metal, or plastic.

  - Visibly dirty surfaces should be cleaned prior to disinfection. Consult EPA's list of disinfectants for use against COVID-19, specifically for use on hard, non-porous surfaces and for your specific application need. More frequent cleaning and disinfection is necessary to reduce exposure.

- **NO**
  - Soft and porous materials like carpet, rugs, or material in seating areas.

  - Thoroughly clean or launder materials. Consider removing soft and porous materials in high traffic areas. Disinfect materials if appropriate products are available.

What type of material is the surface or object?

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