

School district responds to coronavirus concerns

February 28, 2020



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After receiving phone calls from concerned community members about a group of Del Norte High School students that recently returned from a trip to Rikuzentakata, Japan, the Del Norte Unified School District released the following statement:

Recently, the Del Norte Unified School District has received calls regarding the potential for DNHS students returning from Japan carrying the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). The district has been in contact with the Del Norte Department of Public Health, which was fully aware of the travel, and the department confirmed that the risk for COVID-19 is low in Del Norte and that no cases have been confirmed. Public Health does encourage:

- Avoiding contact with sick people;
- Avoiding touching your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands;

—Cleaning your hands often by washing them with soap and water for at least 20 seconds or using an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at 60-95% alcohol. Soap and water should be used if hands are visibly dirty; and

— Most importantly, cleaning hands after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after coughing, sneezing or blowing your nose.

For the purpose of clarification regarding the DNHS trip to Japan, the outbreak of COVID-19 was primarily of concern on mainland China at the time students and staff left Crescent City for Japan. Parents and administrators did have meetings prior to departure to discuss the trip, including recommendations, from the State Department of Health and Center for Disease Control Prevention for international travel. Families also met with a nurse to discuss universal precautions, how to clean surfaces, how to wash hands, and how to properly wear masks. According to Randy Fugate, Principal for the Del Norte County Office of Education, the students were diligent in this effort during the entire trip.

After the DNHS group departed, however, news concerning the virus continued to develop. On or about Feb. 19, after students departed, the CDC identified Japan as a Watch-Level 1, which remained in effect through the time of return of DNHS students and did not recommend canceling or postponing travel. They did recommend that travelers take basic precautions, such as washing hands and not being in close contact with sick people. On Saturday, Feb. 22, after the return of students, the CDC changed the designation to Alert-Level 2, adding to previous recommendations that older adults and those with chronic health issues should consider postponing travel.

At no time did the Department of State, CDC or the State of California recommend or enforce quarantine for those traveling from Japan.

For more information, you may:

- Check the CDC travel website for travel alerts and specific guidance
- Learn more about coronavirus in Japan
- Learn more about coronavirus in California
- Find more local information from the Health Department about COVID-19
- Follow Del Norte County Public Health on Facebook.