Napa County Office of Education

Considerations for Reopening Schools During the COVID-19 Pandemic


July 13, 2020

www.napacoe.org
Introduction

This has been an extraordinarily challenging and difficult year. From the moment we learned about the spread of COVID 19 in California our lives abruptly changed in the most fundamental ways, including the closure of schools since mid-March.

As difficult as it was to make the decision to close the schools so that we could flatten the curve and ensure that the healthcare system was not overwhelmed, it has been far more difficult to make plans to reopen the schools for in-person education while the pandemic continues. Family surveys in June indicated that the majority of parents want their children to return to school full time. This is also the thinking of many public health officers, pediatricians and the American Academy of Pediatrics, who believe that we will do more harm to children by continuing to keep them out of school than to have them return to school, utilizing the physical distancing, face coverings, handwashing and cleaning protocols that are required for our safety.

Our goal in Napa County is to begin school instruction as planned in August (Pope Valley Elementary Union School District-PVUESD will open July 20). You will find in this Guidance a selection of options for in-person and distance learning our local school districts are considering. We understand that families who have older and/or immune-compromised individuals as part of the household may not wish to send their child back to school, and they will have the option to continue full distance learning. As pandemic conditions change, schools will adapt accordingly.

We have consulted the guidance from the California Department of Education, the California Department of Public Health, and our Napa County Public Health Officer, Dr. Karen Relucio. They all agree that as students and staff return to classrooms we can best protect everyone by wearing face coverings, practicing good hygiene with frequent hand washing/hand sanitizing throughout the day, and keeping physical distance of 6 feet as practicable from other people. Those are the requirements we have included in this document. Additionally, there are other recommendations and restrictions on normal school activities. Parents and students must be prepared for different procedures in our schools and classrooms.

We are doing all that we can to provide a school environment that limits risk while providing a quality education and a positive social-emotional environment for students and staff. This guidance is available online at napcoe.org/ncoe-emergency-information/. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Barbara Nemko, Ph.D.
Napa County Superintendent of Schools
bnemko@napcoe.org, 707-253-6810

Acknowledgements

This document, provided by the Napa County Office of Education (NCOE), is a collection of considerations, ideas, information and guidelines to support Napa County school districts in developing plans for reopening schools for the 2020-2021 school year. The guidance of the Napa County Department of Public Health, California Department of Public Health, California Department of Education and California's Resilience Roadmap Stages have been essential in the development of this document. Our thanks to the Solano County Office of Education for providing their guide as the primary source document, and to the Alameda and Marin County Offices of Education and Santa Clara County Public Health for best practices.
## CDPH, CDE, and Napa County (NCPH) Guidance

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>CDPH</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>All staff should use cloth face coverings unless Cal/OSHA standards require respiratory protection.</td>
<td>All staff and students should wear cloth face coverings or face shields while at school or on a bus, and maintain 6 feet of physical distance during school activities.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students should be encouraged to use cloth face coverings. Cloth face coverings are most essential in settings where physical distancing cannot easily be maintained, such as school buses or other settings where space may be insufficient.</td>
<td>Students should use cloth face coverings, especially in circumstances when physical distancing cannot be maintained. If an LEA requires students to wear face coverings, then the LEA must provide face coverings to be used. Consider how the LEA will address students with disabilities who refuse or are not able to wear masks. At a minimum, face coverings should be worn: 1. While waiting to enter the school campus. 2. While on school grounds (except when eating or drinking). 3. While leaving school. 4. While on a school bus. a. Driver has access to surplus masks to provide to students who are symptomatic on the bus.</td>
<td>Students in grades 3 - 12 are required to wear face coverings while on campus. Face coverings are strongly recommended for students in TK – grade 2.</td>
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### CDPH
**California Department of Public Health**

Teachers can use face shields, if available, which enable younger students to see their teachers’ faces and to avoid potential barriers to phonological instruction.

Per Cal/OSHA, considerations for face shields should include a cloth drape attached across the bottom and tucked into shirt.

### CDE
**California Department of Education**

LEAs should make reasonable accommodations such as a face shield with a cloth drape for those who are unable to wear face coverings for medical reasons.

Teachers could use face shields, which enable students to see their faces and to avoid potential barriers to phonological instruction.

Per Cal/OSHA, considerations for face shields should include a cloth drape attached across the bottom and tucked into shirt.

### NCPH
**Napa County Public Health**

Teachers could use face shields, which enable students to see their faces and to avoid potential barriers to phonological instruction. Face shields must include a cloth drape attached across the bottom and tucked into shirt.

### Symptom Screening

Conduct visual wellness checks of all students and take students' temperature with a no-touch thermometer.

LEAs will need to designate staff and create a system for student entry that accommodates temperature checks for all students. This could include a self-screening process for families prior to coming to school. In some instances, they may also need to arrange for staff to take the temperatures of students and staff as they arrive to prevent the further spread of the coronavirus.

Students/families and staff are required to self-screen at home or before entering the building. Symptom assessment is per CDC guidance: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html).

Schools are required to develop a system to confirm on an ongoing basis with parents/guardians of students that symptom screenings are being completed daily prior to students arriving at school.
## COVID-19 Considerations for Schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Physical Distancing</strong></th>
<th><strong>CDPH</strong> California Department of Public Health</th>
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<th><strong>NCPH</strong> Napa County Public Health</th>
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<td>Maximize space between seating and desks. Distance teacher and other staff desks at least six feet away from student desks. Consider ways to establish separation of students through other means if practicable, such as, six feet between desks, partitions between desks, markings on classroom floors to promote distancing or arranging desks in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact.</td>
<td>Determine maximum capacity for students of each classroom while meeting 6-foot physical distancing objectives. Plan to limit the number of people in all campus spaces to the number that can be reasonably accommodated while maintaining a minimum of 6 feet of distance between individuals.</td>
<td>If feasible, desks should be placed 6 feet apart and arranged in a way that minimizes face-to-face contact. Consider ways to establish separation of students through other means if practicable, such as partitions between desks. However, with cohorts in place, it is permissible to relax the 6-feet recommendation if it ensures all/more students receive in-class instruction. (e.g. if reducing to a minimum of 4 feet allows for more practicable cohort sizes). Face coverings and cohort stability are higher priorities if they allow for more practical utilization of physical spaces to provide in-person instruction.</td>
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| **Size** | Students should remain in the same space and in groups as small and consistent as practicable. | To the extent possible, and as recommended by the CDC, attempt to create smaller student/educator cohorts to minimize the mixing of student groups throughout the day. | As practicable, students should remain in the same space and in groups as small and as consistent as possible. When it is not possible to remain in stable cohorts within the same space (e.g. secondary school), face coverings, physical distancing, and limiting group gatherings are a higher priority. |

| **Length of Time** | Keep the same students and teacher or staff with each group, to the greatest extent practicable. | To the extent possible, and as recommended by the CDC, attempt to create smaller student/educator cohorts to minimize the mixing of student groups throughout the day. | To the extent possible, and as recommended by the CDC, attempt to create smaller student/educator cohorts to minimize the mixing of student groups throughout the day. |
### Teacher/Student Movement Rotations

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- **Minimize movement of students and teachers or staff as much as practicable.** For example, consider ways to keep teachers with one group of students for the whole day.
- Limit nonessential visitors, volunteers and activities involving other groups at the same time.
- Minimize movement of students, educators, and staff as much as possible.
- Teachers will be able to teach different cohorts of children as long as they are practicing physical distancing protocols. If a teacher remains solely with one cohort, physical distancing will be less crucial to adhere to at all times. For younger children, keeping a physical distance from teachers will be difficult, which is part of consideration of stable cohort groupings in the younger grades.
Organizing Principles for Preventing COVID-19 Transmission by Age Group

**Organizing Principle:** Stable Cohorts

- Less feasible to limit close contact and wear face coverings
- More feasible to maintain stable cohorts
- Greater need for in-person and group-based instruction with close contact to support social-emotional and academic development

**Organizing Principle:** Physical Distancing & Face Coverings

- More feasible to limit close contact and wear face coverings
- Less feasible to maintain stable cohorts
- Lesser need for in-person or group-based instruction with close contact to support social-emotional and academic development

**Requirements**

**Elementary Schools**

- Ensure students and staff remain in stable classroom cohorts by keeping the same students and teacher or staff together for the entire school day. Students should not mix with other stable classroom cohorts. Students in third grade and up must wear face coverings.

**Middle and High Schools**

- Reduce disease transmission risk by maximizing the space between student desks and requiring face coverings.

**All Schools**

- Distance teacher and staff desks at least six feet away from students to minimize adult-to-child disease transmission.
- Assign stable seating arrangements for students to ensure that close contacts within classrooms are minimized and easily identifiable.
- Increase ventilation by increasing outdoor air circulation (e.g., by opening windows or using high-efficiency air filters and increasing ventilation rates.
- All staff are required to wear face coverings.
Timelines & School Activities

Schools will need to implement major modifications aligned with the California Resilience Roadmap Stages.

Transportation
Drop-off times and procedures for parents and buses will change to maintain physical distancing. On buses, where physical distancing is difficult, all students and the bus driver should wear face coverings. The first row of seats on the bus should not be used by students or adults to allow for physical distancing. Items such as backpacks can be placed on these seats.

Events & Student Activities
Parent and student orientations, sports, cheerleading, club activities, etc. will be adjusted or canceled to comply with health order restrictions on mass gatherings. Gatherings in hallways and around locker rooms should be prevented and discouraged.

Before & After School Activities
Before and After School classroom activities should follow the same principles of physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene and face coverings that are implemented during school hours. Postponed activities should be avoided until Stage 4.

Contact Tracing
Due to public health orders for contact tracing, it may be necessary to keep students in continuous cohort groups in the event of a student or staff member being diagnosed with COVID-19. School administrators should keep attendance records to facilitate contact tracing.

Handwashing
Schools will need to build in additional time for scheduled handwashing/sanitizing including upon arrival, before and after meals or snack time, before and after going to the restroom, and regular intervals throughout the day.

Planning for Supplies

Schools should be well stocked with:
- soap
- paper products
- disinfectant wipes and solutions
- gloves
- masks
- hand sanitizers

Each classroom should remain stocked with these supplies.

Other items to consider:
- Touch-free hand sanitizer stations
- No-touch thermometers
- Plexiglass for high-traffic areas
- Additional equipment for technology needs

Scheduling

To implement physical distancing schools will need to consider:
- altering bell schedules
- staggering start times
- keeping students in small cohorts for structured recess and eating lunch in classrooms or outdoors
- implementing a block schedule in secondary schools to reduce movement during the day and cross contamination of classrooms

Postponed Daily Activities
Playground use, unstructured recess, lunch service in cafeterias, choir, band, and assemblies will need to be delayed until expanded Stage 3 or Stage 4.
Communication with Families & Students

Napa County school districts and the Napa County Office of Education are committed to transparent and ongoing communication with families and students during the COVID-19 pandemic, including:

- Distributing specific public health compliant, data-driven plans for reopening. Plans should emphasize strategies to protect students and staff.
- Developing Infographics to succinctly convey information regarding illness prevention and school procedures.
- Hosting virtual information meetings.
- Utilizing digital communication tools such as email, text, newsletters and social media.
- Communicating directly using text and email with secondary students.
- Displaying prominent and concise signage for illness prevention and rule compliance around facilities.
- Maintaining and updating family contact information, including incoming TK and kindergarten families.
- Developing communication protocols in the event of a staff member or student exhibiting symptoms of or testing positive for COVID-19, including notification to public health, specific notifications and steps taken for the involved cohort, the school site, and communications with staff and families.

Facilities, Custodial & Sanitation

- **Barriers**- Install physical barriers or plexiglass in high-traffic reception areas, workspaces, cafeterias, classrooms, nurse stations etc. where the environment doesn’t lend itself to social distancing.

- **Signage**- Provide prominent and concise signage for protocols, reminders, etc. around facilities.

- **Object placement**- Rearrange, mark or remove furniture as needed to accommodate physical distancing.

- **Floor markers**- Mark spaces for waiting lines at least six feet apart in all directions.

- **Restrooms**- Limit multi-stall restroom use to one person at a time.

- **Equipment**- Play structures, big toys, and other play equipment will need to be restricted or sanitized before/after use. Equipment with porous surfaces should be removed from classrooms.

- **PPE**- Develop protocols to routinely stock, inventory, and replenish Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- **Ventilation**- Maintain and if possible improve the building ventilation system, including opening windows and frequent changing of filters.

- **Stocking supplies**- Disinfectant wipes, gloves, hand sanitizer, soap, and paper towels for hand sanitation must be widely accessible and stocked daily. Hand sanitizing solution should be placed in every classroom, office and shared space throughout buildings.

- **Sanitizing surfaces**- Identify and schedule frequent disinfection of high-touch surfaces. Wipe down phones between uses. Wipe down desks and chairs between student cohorts. Restrooms should be sanitized three times a day. Follow labeling instructions for cleaning products as well as the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) guidance for schools and childcare centers.

- **Limit path of travel**- Define use of specific facilities for each cohort, i.e. entrances, restrooms, paths of travel, etc. to limit mixing of cohorts. Consider using additional campus spaces such as a library, multi-purpose room or gym and regular use of outdoor space weather permitting.

- **All hands on deck**- Provide training to all employees in cleaning and disinfecting procedures for individual areas and work stations to supplement custodial staff efforts.
Illness Prevention Procedures & Protocols

In the coming months, school district and COE staff will follow the specific safety protocols recommended or required by Napa County Public Health, which may include daily health screenings.

Stable Cohorts

Napa County Public Health and the CDC recommend stable cohorts of students and staff that minimally interact with other groups of students. This structure helps to mitigate the spread of germs, enables health providers to trace contacts in the event of an infection, and identify the need for potential closures. Site administrators and teachers will need to coordinate scheduled activities to ensure that cohorts are not mixed.

Contact Tracing and Responsiveness

Napa County Public Health may need to test, trace, track and respond to students, staff and family members who may exhibit symptoms of and/or test positive for COVID-19. Swift responsiveness to potential exposures of cohort members is critical to our ability to support on-going classroom-based instruction.

Physical Distancing

Consider ways to space or mark desk and other workstations six feet apart from each other when practicable.

Staff Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

Staff are required to wear face coverings and may choose to wear additional PPE including face shields and gloves, especially when cleaning and disinfecting. Hand washing stations or hand sanitizer should be made readily available to staff at all times.

Face Coverings

Napa County Public Health and the CDC require that teachers and students in grades 3 - 12 wear face coverings while on campus (face coverings are strongly recommended for students in TK – grade 2). Information will be provided to all staff and families on proper use, removal and washing of cloth face coverings.

Scheduled Handwashing

Public Health recommends scheduled handwashing or hand sanitizer application upon arrival, before and after meals or snack time, before and after going to the restroom, and regular intervals throughout the day.

Isolating Students with Symptoms

Designate a space where students or staff presenting with symptoms will stay while waiting to go home.

Prominent Signage

Concise & clear protocol signage will help students, staff, & parents maintain prevention practices.
Fiscal Considerations

The economic impacts of the pandemic are having significant and lasting impacts on school districts.

Decrease in revenues- California K-12 schools will have significantly decreased funding due to reduced State tax revenues.

Changes in enrollment- Overall school district enrollment may decline due to economic factors and parent concerns. Parent demand for enrollment in distance learning programs may increase as some may perceive them as safer to classroom-based instruction while COVID-19 is in circulation, especially families with high-risk members in the household.

Meal Service Logistics

Increased meal service demand- There has been an increased demand on school nutrition programs which will likely continue. Accommodations will be needed to provide meals to students whose families have chosen the distance learning option in addition to students physically attending school.

Schedule & food distribution sites- Schools should consider solutions such as staggered lunch and breakfast service, meal distribution to classrooms, or grab and go food boxes.

Physical barriers- Plexiglass or barriers may need to be installed.

Multi-meal distribution- Districts may need to continue to provide multiple meals at one time for students if school schedules are adjusted.

Alternative locations for eating- Places for students to eat should be identified and considered in order to keep together cohorts with physical distancing. Cafeterias should be closed and outdoor locations or classrooms should be maximized.

Collaboration with Employee Groups

Collaborate with employee associations well in advance when developing plans that impact the work of their members. Discussion may include topics such as varied scheduling, the possibility of recorded or broadcasted instruction, temporary practice of all staff helping to sanitize, etc.
Meeting Student Needs

Consider the precautions necessary to protect students with special needs relative to the threat posed by COVID-19.

- The health and safety of students, especially high-risk populations, is the priority. School district teams, including Individualized Education Plan and 504 teams, will analyze student needs on a case by case basis. All current medical information will be used for determining instruction, the provision of services and location, in order to accurately and safely calculate student learning needs during the pandemic.
- Appropriate health guidelines that address risk transmission will be carefully followed to maintain a safe learning environment for every student. PPE equipment uniquely designed for learning needs, and all available resources and support will be used to support and protect students that require specialized procedures.
- Ensure the capacity to provide home and hospital instruction (Education Code Section 48206.3) via the Internet (using virtual meeting platforms) to assist students who are ill, under quarantine, or in self-isolation.

Create plans to assess and respond to the uneven outcomes created by school closures.

- Utilize formative assessment tools to understand the individual and collective needs of students.
- Utilize technology to develop individualized plans to meet student needs.

Develop a continuum of distance learning options that may need to be utilized should school be interrupted again in 2020-21.

- Consider more independent study programs as an alternative for families who want this option.
- Use certificated staff who are unable to physically return to campus to support student learning with daily virtual coaching appointments.
- Utilize interactive distance learning (such as a classroom webcast) as a means of providing instruction for students who cannot physically participate in classroom instruction.

Expanded Opportunities for Social-Emotional Supports & Interactions with Caring Adults

A critical component of public education is the opportunity for students to interact with caring adults, and the relationships and connectivity that result from these interactions. Social emotional learning is equally important to academic achievement, especially for younger children.
Scheduling Ideas Shared Across Napa County

Pediatricians and psychologists have acknowledged that prolonged social isolation may lead to mental health issues and the loss of social skills, including the ability to regulate emotions and behavior, to manage conflict and take the perspective of someone else, and to give and receive social support and set boundaries, among others. They are suggesting a “harm-reduction” model which includes a full return to classes in the fall.

**Option 1**
- In-person instruction five days per week. May have reduced hours.
- Requires physical distancing of six feet as practicable with face coverings, frequent handwashing, staying in closed cohorts of up to 25 students as much as possible, providing each child his/her own supplies etc.
- Distance learning will remain an option for those families who do not want their children to return to school.

**Option 2**
- Limit the number of students on campus to 50% of normal.
- Divide the school into two groups: one group would come to school in the morning and the other in the afternoon.
- All teachers provide each group with a hybrid of direct instruction and support, and assignments to complete at home.
- Requires physical distancing of six feet as practicable with face coverings, frequent handwashing, staying in closed cohorts of up to 25 students as much as possible, providing each child his/her own supplies etc.
- Elementary students stay in the same classroom/cohorts.
- Secondary schools could also implement a block schedule to reduce passing periods and lower the frequency of touches in each classroom.
- Time will be allotted for disinfecting between sessions.
- Distance learning will remain an option for those families who do not want their children to return to school.

**Option 3**
- Limit the number of students on campus to 50% of normal.
- Divide all classes into two groups with each group coming to campus two days per week.
- All teachers provide each group with two days of direct instruction and support, and three days of assignments to complete at home each week.
- Requires physical distancing of six feet as practicable with face coverings, frequent handwashing, staying in closed cohorts of up to 25 students as much as possible, providing each child his/her own supplies etc.
- Secondary schools could also implement a block schedule to reduce passing periods and lower the frequency of touches in each classroom.
- Provide take-home meals for each eligible student before they leave each day.
- Disinfecting would occur days students not in school.
- Distance learning will remain an option for those families who do not want their children to return to school.

**Option 4**
- Instruction will be delivered through distance learning with physical school campuses closed to students upon the advice of Public Health.
## Napa County Public Health Protocols on the Onset of Symptoms, Potential Exposure to and/or Close Contact with an Individual Testing Positive for COVID-19 in a School Classroom/Cohort Setting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Communication</th>
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| **1** A student or staff member either exhibits COVID-19 symptoms, answers yes to a health screening question or has a temp of 100.4 or above. | • Send student or staff home until they are symptom free for at least 72 hours and have either a note from their health care provider clearing them or a negative COVID-19 test.  
• **Cohort OPEN** | **No action is needed** |
| **2** A family member or someone in close contact with a student or staff member test positive for COVID-19. | • Student or staff: Report information to administrator. Send student or staff home until they are symptom free for at least 72 hours and have either a note from their health care provider clearing them or a negative COVID-19 test.  
• **Cohort OPEN** | To: student families and staff  
Template Letter:  
**Household Member or contact w/ COVID-19** |
| **3** A student or staff member tests positive for COVID-19. | • Student or staff: Report information to administrator. Student or staff remain home until they are symptom free for at least 72 hours and have either a note from their health care provider clearing them or a negative COVID-19 test.  
• **Cohort CLOSED for 14 days from last exposure** | To: student families and staff  
Template Letter:  
**Confirmed COVID-19 in Cohort** |
| **4** A student or staff member tests negative for COVID-19 after any of the reasons in scenarios 1, 2 or 3. | • Student or staff: May return to cohort 3 days after symptoms resolve, however must continue isolation if in contact with COVID-19 family member.  
• **Cohort OPEN** | To: student families and staff  
Template Letter:  
**Negative Test Cohort Member** |

### Other Planning Resources
- Centers for Disease Control - [Interim Guidance for Administrators of US K-12 Schools and Child Care Programs](#)
- American Academy of Pediatrics - [Guidance on Reopening Schools](#) and [Planning Considerations](#)
- American Federation of Teachers - [Blueprint for Reopening Schools](#) and [Plan to Reopen Schools](#)
- American Enterprise Institute - [Blueprint for Back to School](#) - Summary and [Full Report](#)
The purpose of this tool is to assist administrators in making (re)opening decisions regarding K-12 schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is important to check with state and local health officials and other partners to determine the most appropriate actions while adjusting to meet the unique needs and circumstances of the local community.

**Should you consider opening?**

- ✓ Will reopening be consistent with applicable state and local orders?
- ✓ Is the school ready to protect children and employees at higher risk for severe illness?
- ✓ Are you able to screen students and employees upon arrival for symptoms and history of exposure?

**Are recommended health and safety actions in place?**

- ✓ Promote **healthy hygiene practices** such as **hand washing** and **employees wearing a cloth face covering**, as feasible
- ✓ Intensify **cleaning, disinfection**, and ventilation
- ✓ Encourage **social distancing** through increased spacing, small groups and limited mixing between groups, if feasible
- ✓ Train all employees on health and safety protocols

**Is ongoing monitoring in place?**

- ✓ Develop and implement procedures to check for **signs and symptoms** of students and employees daily upon arrival, as feasible
- ✓ Encourage anyone who is sick to **stay home**
- ✓ Plan for if students or employees get sick
- ✓ Regularly communicate and monitor developments with local authorities, employees, and families regarding cases, exposures, and updates to policies and procedures
- ✓ Monitor student and employee absences and have flexible leave policies and practices
- ✓ Be ready to consult with the local health authorities if there are cases in the facility or an increase in cases in the local area

**DO NOT OPEN**

**MEET SAFEGUARDS FIRST**

**OPEN AND MONITOR**

[cdc.gov/coronavirus]