



Frequently Asked Questions Coronavirus (COVID-19)

(Updated March 31, 2020)

Why are schools being closed?

Every effort is being made to help prevent the community spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). As one of Springfield's largest employers and the largest school district in Missouri, SPS impacts a large number of people and can play an important role in limiting the transmission of the virus. We understand from monitoring the spread of the virus in other communities that school closures are a key strategy used to help slow the spread of coronavirus. In our community, the Springfield-Greene County Health Department (SGCHD) is responsible for managing this health emergency, and SPS is following its guidance in all matters related to coronavirus.

In consultation with SGCHD officials, SPS announced March 16 that all **SPS schools will be closed through at least Friday, April 3**. Numerous other school districts surrounding Springfield have also closed for the same time period.

Update (March 24): Greene County and the City of Springfield issued a stay-at-home order for the next 30 days, beginning at 12:01 a.m. on March 26. [View the order.](#) Information will be provided to SPS students, parents and employees on March 25 about the impact this will have on SPS. It will **not affect the distribution of free meals** to students or childcare services being provided for health care workers and emergency/first responder personnel. These and other essential services are exempt from this order and will continue.

What resources are available to support my child's learning while school is not in session?

While there is no substitute for the face-to-face instruction provided by our dedicated teachers, we are developing options for families that will facilitate learning and promote a sense of normalcy and routine.

Update (March 24): SPS will introduce a new online learning platform to support students and parents. The platform is called “SPS at Home” and includes both virtual and printed resources. Learning will resume using the “SPS at Home” tool on March 30. Please watch for information by email before March 30.

Please also be aware that beginning on Monday, March 23, **teachers will be making phone calls to families** as part of a wellness check to determine if there are any unmet needs. This will help us connect families to available resources and identify areas that may still need to be addressed.

Will SPS cancel athletic competitions and other events?

While schools are closed all extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, including athletic competitions, practices and after-school programs and events, will be canceled.

While schools are closed, will meals be available for students?

We know many of our students do not have access to nutritious meals when school is out. Beginning Monday, March 23, **free breakfast and lunch will be available for pick up** Monday through Friday from 9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at every SPS school. Students ages 18 and under will be able to go to the school closest to them and pick up ready-to-eat breakfast and/or lunch meals to take home.

What resources are available if my family is experiencing financial hardships?

Some families may be experiencing financial stress during this time. Free meals are being distributed during the closure but if a family’s financial situation has changed, they may be eligible to receive free or reduced price meals when students return to school. They can complete the [Free or Reduced Lunch Application](#) now in preparation. It is at sps.org. Click on the About SPS tab>Programs and Services>Nutrition Services. There you will find the link to the application under the Helpful Links column. Expanded benefits are also available to eligible families through the Pandemic Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (P-SNAP). More information is provided by the Missouri Department of Social Services [here](#).

Will childcare services be offered?

To support our community response to this health crisis, **childcare will be available for the children of healthcare and emergency response workers**. Beginning, March 23, these services will be provided from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m. Monday through Friday. Pre-registration is required. To be eligible, children must be enrolled in grades pre-kindergarten through 8 in SPS or a neighboring school district. They will be

assigned to small groups and will be supervised by SPS staff. Everyone will be checked daily for symptoms before being allowed to enter the site.

Healthcare providers and emergency/first responder agencies are distributing information to their employees about how to enroll their children.

What can I do to keep myself and my family healthy?

Practicing good hygiene habits and social distancing, among other actions, can help prevent the spread of coronavirus and keep you and your family healthy. [This video](#) explains the importance of social distancing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers tips for protecting you and your family [here](#).

What should I do if I or a member of my family exhibit symptoms?

Influenza and other respiratory infections including COVID-19 have similar if not identical signs and symptoms. Individuals who think they are sick or are getting sick should NOT report to work or school. Individuals should monitor for cough, shortness of breath, and fever and should practice social distancing to avoid the spread of any illness they may have. [Read more information from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.](#)

What should I tell my child about COVID-19?

Conversations and news media coverage surrounding COVID-19 may prompt children to ask questions or to express concerns about themselves or their family and friends becoming ill. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention offers tips for talking with your children [here](#).

Will this closure change the last day of school?

At this time, we do not know how this closure will affect our school calendar. As soon as that determination has been made, it will be communicated to parents and employees.

Where can I find more information?

Important updates from Springfield Public Schools will be posted at www.sps.org/healthupdate. Other official sources of information are the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) and the [Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services](#).