



United States Department of the Interior

BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:
Director, BIE

Date: 14 March 2020

To: School Leaders, BIE-funded Schools
From: Tony L. Dearman, Director
Subject: BIE-Funded School Closure Guidance Memorandum

1. Purpose

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance regarding the temporary closure of a Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) funded school location due to identified risks posed by COVID-19 that create facility conditions that may constitute an immediate hazard to health and safety. This guidance is specific to BIE and is not intended to apply to existing Department of the Interior (DOI) or Indian Affairs (IA) policies and guidance.

2. Scope¹

This guidance applies to all BIE funded school locations.

3. Guidelines

The following guidelines shall be followed:

- a. In consultation with the local Public Health Official (PHO), the school leader (i.e. superintendent or principal) may consider if school closure is warranted and the length of time based on the risk level within the specific community in coordination with the local PHO.
- b. The school leader will notify their respective Education Program Administrator (EPA) of written directives from a local PHO regarding closure of the school location. The EPA will utilize the BIE chain of command to communicate with their appropriate supervisors and BIE School Operations division to assist in mitigation activities.
- c. If temporary closure is warranted by the BIE Director, the BIE Director will issue a closure letter to the school administrator, school board, Tribe(s) and parents with an effective date of closure.
- d. The BIE will implement a communication protocol to include outreach to students, parents, teachers, staff, and the community. School representatives are responsible for

¹ Authorities for this guidance can be found at 25 U.S.C. § 2001(d)(2)(B); 20 U.S.C § 2006(a); 130 DM 8.

outreach to parents/guardians of each student to make notification of the potential school closure. The appropriate BIE Associate Deputy Director (ADD) will contact the affected Tribe(s).

- e. BIE Human Resources, School Operations Division, and school leaders will coordinate with appropriate school staff, contractors, and Federal partners to make appropriate notifications of personnel matters in Bureau-operated schools.
- f. In consultation with the local PHO, school leaders will determine readmission criteria after the school closure, in coordination with the BIE, to determine the necessary means for completing the academic school year and required number of hours.
- g. It is recommended that school leaders cancel extracurricular group activities and large scale events, in coordination with their local PHO.
- h. If cases of COVID-19 have been identified among students or staff in on-campus community housing, the BIE will work with the local PHO to take additional precautions. BIE will consult with the local PHO to coordinate potential temporary housing locations, self-quarantine, and symptom monitoring for any ill resident and their close contacts (students, staff, or otherwise). Information on providing home care to individuals with COVID-19 who do not require hospitalization is available on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) website.
- i. The determination as to whether to send students home should be made in consultation with the local PHO and based on local needs and resources. Prior to making such a determination, schools should consider the risk of maintaining students on campus as compared to the logistical and health considerations associated with students traveling to their permanent homes.
- j. At the direction of the Secretary, a court of competent jurisdiction or any other governing authority, BIE reserves the right to amend this guidance document. In such an event, BIE will timely notify all affected entities.

4. Approval


Tony L. Dearman, Director

3-14-20
Date