

# Coronavirus (COVID-19)



## Supporting secondary students' mental health and wellbeing during COVID -19

*With repercussions of COVID-19 continuing to impact the community, schools need to be prepared to monitor and respond to an increase in student wellbeing concerns. This fact sheet provides information about how school staff can support secondary students' wellbeing and mental health at school, including where to get information and advice.*

### Communicating with parents

As changes are made to school routines and processes, including school day start and finish times, access to school grounds and lunch times, these should be clearly communicated to parents. Encourage parents to contact the school if they have any questions or concerns.

- Everyone at school is practising good hygiene, the school is being cleaned regularly, and there are sufficient supplies of soap and sanitiser.
- The Government is closely monitoring the situation - if the virus starts to spread again, decisions about what we need to do to keep everyone safe will be made quickly.
- If anyone at your school does feel sick, they will stay away from school until they feel better.

### Helping students feel safe at school

Older students will likely be aware of the relatively low rate of COVID-19 in the community and the rationale for why it is safe for students to be at school. However, some students may still feel anxious about whether it is safe for them to be at school when COVID-19 is still present in the community. In particular, students who are concerned about getting the virus, or who have family members with pre-existing health conditions may be especially anxious.

It is important to check in with your students about how they feel and, if they are worried, to help them know that it is safe. Tell students the facts, including that:

- Schools are making decisions based on Government and health advice.
- It is considered safe for students to be in the classroom with their peers.

### Challenges for students

During times of stress and uncertainty, it is normal for young people to feel more worried in general. You may notice increased levels of worry from students about:

- Being separated from parents, carers and immediate family who are vulnerable.
- School work – senior students may continue to feel anxious that they have fallen behind in their learning this year.
- Social relationships with friends and peers - everyone deals with stress differently and this can put strain on peer relationships.



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## Supporting students in the classroom

Your school's [whole school approach](#) to supporting students' mental health and wellbeing provides a strong framework for supporting students during this challenging time. With the help of support staff, you can support students' at school by:

- Ensuring mental health and wellbeing is a priority.
- Providing opportunities to check in with students as a group or individually.
- Focusing on establishing and maintaining school and classroom routines.
- Encouraging students to look after their own mental health and wellbeing.

## Getting advice and support

- Talk to your guidance officer and student support team about your school's approach to monitoring, identifying and supporting students with mental health and wellbeing concerns.
- Ensure students who need additional or more intensive support are referred to the guidance officer or other support staff.
- Contact your [Regional Mental Health Coach](#) for advice and support about strengthening or adding to your school's whole school approach to supporting students' mental health and wellbeing.
- Access [Be You](#), for information about:
  - [supporting educators during the pandemic](#).
  - support regarding [suicide prevention and response](#).
- Visit [headspace schools](#) to access [resources](#) on supporting young people's mental health.

## Staff support

The department recognises the significant impact of COVID-19 and subsequent changes to education delivery on teaching staff. A range of information and resources for staff are available on [One Portal](#).