



Dear Mercy Families,

As we begin Intersession Week, we at Mercy assure you that we are keeping track of coronavirus news and updates in states where our students are traveling. While we certainly understand your concern, especially for those with daughters traveling to New York, Oregon and Washington, at this time, it is important to be aware of facts and not respond to fear.

For those whose concerns have been raised due to the official declaration of a state of emergency in Washington, be aware that this official status allows government officials to access State aid to supplement local resources in preventing or alleviating the disease.

There have been no confirmed cases of COVID-19 in Ashland, only one confirmed case in Manhattan, and ten confirmed cases in King County and Seattle, most originating in a nursing facility and medical centers. All have been identified and quarantined. All three state health departments continue to say that the risk remains low for those living and working in the places where Mercy students are expected to travel.

As we do when on campus, our faculty and staff will continue to follow CDC guidelines. Coronavirus is spread between people who are in close contact with one another via coughing or sneezing. It may also spread by touching a surface or object (like a cellphone) with the virus on it. The same good health habits that prevent other viruses like the flu, also help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and decrease the risk of getting sick:

- Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer, with 60% alcohol, if soap and water are not available.
- Cough into a tissue or elbow (not hand), then throw the tissue away and wash hands.
- Avoid touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid contact with people who are sick and stay home when ill.

While news of the virus has taken top billing, the virus is NOT currently spreading widely in the United States. For the general American public, the immediate health risk from COVID-19 is considered low. People in communities with reported COVID-19 cases are at elevated though still relatively low risk of exposure.

We at Mercy share your concern about your daughter's health and well-being. Rest assured we continue to keep track of news and updates about COVID-19 and are keeping a close eye on the health of our students and staff in all locations this week. Should a student develop a fever or cough, moderators will immediately alert parents/guardians and seek medical assistance. As this week progresses, we will continue to keep in communication with you should there be any updates regarding COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Sister Carolyn Krohn

