



**HEALTH  
DEPARTMENT**  
Public Health Unit

Director of Public Health- Linda Beers, MPH  
Director of Preventive Services- Susan Allott, MSN

March 15, 2020

To: Dan Palmer, County Manager / Shaun Gilliland, Essex County Board Chairman / Essex County School Superintendents / CEWW BOCES Superintendent

From: Essex County Board of Health

Re: COVID-19 School Containment and Mitigations Efforts

Date: Effective immediately through April 20, 2020

As you are aware, the virus that causes COVID-19 appears to be rapidly spreading. Containment measures suggest that one way we can diminish community spread is to reduce large scale "gatherings". Governor Cuomo and President Trump have declared State and National emergencies. Governor Cuomo has further prohibited gatherings greater than 500 and mandated the reduced occupancy of facilities with capacities of less than 500 to half the capacity. Globally, the World Health Organization has designated the spread of COVID-19 as a pandemic.

At this time, as the Director of Public Health in Essex County, I am recommending school closures through April 20, 2020 to encourage social distancing, more frequent environmental cleaning, and remote classroom learning. The Essex County Board of Health, in consultation with the Essex County Health Department, has determined that it is challenging to maintain the recommended 6 feet in distance to exercise proper social distancing, and due to the challenge of adequate volumes of hand sanitizer and adequate environmental cleaning supplies, that proactive measures are needed to further contain this pandemic in Essex County.

I recognize that implementing these measures may cause hardship; however, we must act quickly and decisively to secure the health and safety of our most vulnerable populations. These recommendations align with similar efforts across the county and state to contain the community spread of COVID-19. The public health evidence is clear, social distancing, in combination with other non-pharmaceutical interventions can effectively limit the spread of pathogens and reduce the severity/intensity of outbreaks, allowing our healthcare systems more time to respond effectively.

Throughout the upcoming weeks, the Essex County Health Department, in consultation with our healthcare providers and the State Department of Health, will closely monitor the burden of disease within the community and issue advisories accordingly.

Sincerely,

Linda L. Beers