



# COVID-19 research update

April 10, 2020

*The Health Policy Institute of Ohio is collecting the latest research so that Ohio policymakers and other stakeholders can make informed decisions on the rapidly evolving COVID-19 pandemic. HPIO has also created a [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) resource page](#) to serve as a "one-stop-shop" for links to the Ohio Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and other sources of frequently updated, reputable information.*

## Assessment outlines lessons learned from China's relaxing of social distancing restrictions

[An assessment of COVID-19 in China](#) (Lancet, April 8) found that because herd immunity has not been achieved, relaxing non-pharmaceutical interventions (NPI) such as social distancing, should be done with caution. The authors found that if restrictions are not relaxed gradually, the number of positive cases could begin rising exponentially. As NPIs are relaxed in Ohio and the rest of the United States, transmission rate and case fatality risk will need to be closely monitored. Monitoring these outcomes requires capacity for widespread testing.

## Studies shed light on impact of COVID-19 school closures

A [review of school closures during the COVID-19 outbreak](#) (Lancet, April 6) shows mixed evidence of effectiveness. According to the authors, widespread school closures that have been implemented in response to the COVID-19 pandemic are based on evidence for influenza outbreaks. Evidence from coronavirus outbreaks, including the COVID-19 outbreak, is limited and mixed. According to the authors, more research is needed. They state that "the evidence to support national closure of schools to combat COVID-19 is very weak and data from influenza outbreaks suggest that school closures could have relatively small effects on a virus with COVID-19's high transmissibility and apparent low clinical effect on school children." Furthermore, school closures can have severe social and economic consequences.

A [commentary on school closures](#) (Lancet, April 7) outlines two mechanisms through which school closures will affect low-income children in the USA and Europe. The authors state that closing schools for a long period of time could have detrimental social and health consequences for children living in poverty, and exacerbate existing inequalities. First, school closures will

increase food insecurity, and second, school closures are likely to widen the learning gap between children from families with lower incomes and families with higher incomes.

## Tactics outlined for increasing public health capacity to address COVID-19 pandemic

[An article](#) (MIT Technology Review, April 8) describing a new task force in San Francisco to support the contact tracing efforts of local health departments offers a blueprint for building similar public health capacity in other areas of the country. The article explores the importance of contact tracing and provides examples of how this work has been done during the COVID-19 outbreak in other countries.

[Another article](#) (JAMA, April 8) describes another tactic for increasing public health capacity for addressing the pandemic. The authors recommend suspending the first year of medical school for the upcoming academic year and enlisting those students in a national service program for public health to address a possible second wave of COVID-19. The authors suggest that the students could take online training courses in July focused on infectious diseases and outbreak response and then be deployed in state and local health departments to increase capacity in multiple roles, including surveillance and call center staffing.