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Investing today for a healthy tomorrow

August 26, 2021 - UPDATED

To: School District Superintendents of Harvey County

From: Dr. Doyle Detweiler, Medical Director and Public Health Officer of Harvey County
Lynnette Redington, Director, Harvey County Health Department

RE: K-12 School Guidance for COVID-19 for school year 2021-22

With schools opening in August 2021, the pandemic of COVID-19 virus still not over and vaccination rates in the county only in the 50 percentile range, the Harvey County Health Department has established this guidance for school districts. Recognizing the still changing landscape of COVID-19, this guidance will be updated as science and disease spread changes. The following guidance references the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and KS Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) documents.

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>,

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/k-12-guidance.html>, and

<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2098/Updated-Guidance-COVID-19-Prevention-in-Schools-PDF---8-10-2021-?bidId=>

- Masks are highly recommended to be worn indoors by all individuals (age 2 and older) in areas of substantial or high transmission of COVID-19. When the county is not considered an area of substantial or high COVID-19 transmission, masks should continue to be worn indoors by those not fully vaccinated. Consistent and correct mask use is especially important indoors and in crowded settings, when physical distancing cannot be maintained.
- Students benefit from in-person learning, and safely returning to in-person instruction in the fall 2021 is a priority.
- Vaccination is currently the leading public health prevention strategy to end the COVID-19 pandemic. Promoting vaccination can help schools safely return to in-person learning as well as extracurricular activities and sports.
- CDC recommends schools maintain at least 3 feet of physical distance between students within classrooms, combined with indoor mask wearing by people who are not fully vaccinated, to reduce transmission risk. When it is not possible to maintain a physical distance of at least 3 feet, such as when schools cannot fully re-open while maintaining these distances, it is especially important to layer multiple other prevention strategies, such as indoor masking.
- Screening testing, ventilation, handwashing and respiratory etiquette, staying home when sick and getting tested, contact tracing in combination with quarantine and isolation, and cleaning and disinfection are also important layers of prevention to keep schools safe.

Harvey County Health Department is committed to protecting the public's health and environment, preventing disease, and promoting healthy living.

- Students, teachers, and staff should stay home when they have signs of any infectious illness and be referred to their healthcare provider for testing and care.
- Many schools serve children under the age of 12 who are not eligible for vaccination at this time. Therefore, this guidance emphasizes implementing layered prevention strategies (e.g., using multiple prevention strategies together consistently) to protect people who are not fully vaccinated, including students, teachers, staff, and other members of their households.
- Districts should monitor community transmission, vaccination coverage, screening testing, and occurrence of outbreaks to guide decisions on the level of layered prevention strategies (e.g., physical distancing, screening testing).

Harvey County Health Department response to positive COVID-19 testing results and contacts:

Bound by state law for infectious diseases with the oversight by Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE), the Harvey County Health Department will respond to any positive COVID19 result through an approved laboratory with an investigation. KDHE and local protocol will be followed to ensure the safety and health of all.

ISOLATION:

An individual who receives a positive COVID-19 result will remain in a *minimum* of 10 day isolation period, unless symptoms of virus are still present. The initial date of isolation will be determined by the case investigator’s findings. Release letters will be provided to school personnel.

QUARANTINE: Any close contacts will be contacted for quarantine procedures outlined by KDHE and Harvey County Medical Director. This quarantine period may be up to 14 days. Close contacts in K-12 settings are those individuals deemed 6 feet or closer for 10 minutes or more who have not been fully vaccinated. *Those who have had a documented positive COVID-19 antigen or PCR test within the last 6 months are exempt from quarantine.*

Those fully vaccinated are exempt from the quarantine. Fully vaccinated people who have come into close contact with someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 are recommended to be tested 3-5 days after exposure, and then again 7-10 days after exposure, and wear a mask in indoor settings for 14 days or until they receive a negative test result. Fully vaccinated individuals are those who received the COVID-19 vaccine and are two full weeks post the last vaccine in the series.

Those not fully vaccinated and a contact of a case identified with a variant of concern will have a 14-day quarantine period.

Modified quarantine may be allowed in certain circumstances and would allow in-person learning/participation to continue for exposed students. However, students will resume home quarantine outside of in-person learning/participation. Schools may allow Modified Quarantine for students only when all of the following protective measures are in place:

- Student must wear a mask or quarantine at home
- Distancing of 6 feet from others is maintained at all times, especially when student is consuming food/drink or is unmasked for any reason
- Symptom screening and adopted school-based testing procedure should be completed at the beginning of each day by school personnel throughout the Modified Quarantine period

With the advancement of COVID-19 testing options, USD should consider a policy regarding over-the-counter COVID-19 test results reporting (i.e. will verbal reports be accepted or require only test verification by school personnel and/or through an authorized provider?)

In reference to the KDHE *Updated Guidance for COVID-19 Prevention in K-12 Schools* document (page 4 on link below) testing strategy plans of “Test to Stay and Learn” and “Test to Stay, Play and Participate,” Harvey County Medical Director has approved any close contacts who choose to test daily for the “Test to Stay and Learn” plan and receive a negative result may continue to participate in extracurricular activities and school-based events that same day. (Note- if events are on a Saturday or Sunday of quarantine period, individual MUST be tested prior to participation. Otherwise, if contact is not participating in any school events on weekends, antigen testing does not need to be completed.)

As for mask requirement using these testing strategy plans, if activity/event is outdoors and contact may remain 6 feet or more from others, masks are not required. Masking is required when contact is in huddles, close quarters, or indoors.

When activity/event involves close contact(s) and other school districts, implementation of “Test to Stay...” plan should be made known to the participating school(s). The HCHD only has authority in Harvey County.

<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/2098/Updated-Guidance-COVID-19-Prevention-in-Schools-PDF---8-10-2021-?bidId=>

Due to the communicable disease and continued pandemic status of COVID-19, communication with school nurses/personnel will be made regarding school-based isolation and quarantined individuals.

Additional consideration: With the flu season approaching, vaccinations will be offered again to all school sites for administration. It is highly encouraged that school districts recommend the use of masks during the October 2021 – February 2022 influenza season.

Original Guidance - July 29, 2021

Updated – August 13, 2021 (add KDHE guidance reference and quarantine update)

Updated – August 26, 2021 (clarify testing strategy plans and HCHD medical director approval)