



Health & Environment

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Johnson County Public Health Officials make recommendations on winter indoor activities to Johnson County school superintendents

(JOHNSON COUNTY, KAN) Oct. 27, 2020 – Today Johnson County public health officials strongly recommended that schools do not allow indoor sports or activities such as basketball or wrestling where COVID-19 mitigation techniques are not possible, due to the level of community transmission and consequently, the risks involved. They provided that information in a letter to all school superintendents today.

“While school districts permitted athletics and activities during the summer and fall months, many were outdoor sports that allowed for some safeguards to minimize the risk of widespread transmissions,” said Dr. Sanmi Areola, director of Johnson County Department of Health and Environment. “The risk of transmission of the virus is significantly higher with indoor sports and activities. The chances of widespread transmission in schools is higher if these indoor activities are performed, especially when spectators are allowed.”

Schools have the authority to make decisions on learning modes, activities and athletics. The letter to the school superintendents today was a recommendation and included mitigation techniques for schools that decide to proceed with indoor winter sports and activities. The mitigation techniques include masking, cohorting teams, testing to quickly identify infections, not allowing spectators or limiting spectator attendance to immediate family members, and monitoring for symptoms.

Background information

JCDHE released school gating criteria for K-12 schools on July 28 to help families and school districts make decisions about the reopening of schools in Johnson County in the safest way possible. They outlined recommendations for learning modes and extracurricular activities, based on public health data about the community transmission of COVID-19. Since then JCDHE has provided schools with additional guidance and updates school recommendations. The recommendations are based on currently available information, data and science as well as expert analysis from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Children’s Mercy Hospital. Recommendations for schools and families can be found at <https://www.jocogov.org/school-reopening-criteria>. The gating criteria are updated daily and is available on the [JCDHE dashboard](#) in the schools tab.

Attached is a letter to Johnson County superintendents from Dr. Sanmi Areola, JCDHE director.

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