



**JOHNSON COUNTY**  
KANSAS  
**Health & Environment**

August 18, 2020

Dear Johnson County families:

In Johnson County, science and data will continue to be the premises for our response to COVID-19. Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) has been communicating with you that the number of new COVID-19 cases and the percentage of tests that are positive in our community are increasing.

JCDHE developed the gating criteria in consultation with the school districts per school districts' request. The goal is for school districts to be able to use this data to make decisions which reduce the risk in conducting school and extra-curricular activities.

The risk is less to open schools when community transmission is low. Currently our community transmission continues to increase. Unfortunately, Johnson County has not met the threshold in the school gating criteria for a safe return to in-person learning, even under a hybrid model. Additional considerations were made for elementary schools. This is consistent with our discussions when developing the gating criteria.

There are many ways to look at and present data. Our school gating criteria has been based on two data points: a 14-day moving average of positivity rate and a number of average new cases per day. We have just added a third data point, which is the rate of new cases per 100,000 residents.

We averaged 106 cases per day last week (total of 740 new infections) and 90 cases per day the preceding week (total of 629 new infections).

The 740 new infections from last week represents a rate of 120 new cases per 100,000 residents. The 629 new infections from the previous week represents a rate of 102 new cases per 100,000 residents.

No matter how the data is presented, the level of transmission of COVID-19 in the county is too high. Our responsibility to lead efforts to promote and improve the health of every member of this county is one that we take seriously.

Consistent with the gating criteria released earlier and based on the number of new infections and the trajectory of positivity rate, Johnson County is in the Red zone.

Our primary consideration is to ensure the health of our residents, including school-aged children. These priorities must be balanced with the need for education and necessary social interactions for our younger residents.

If we want to lower the risk for schools, the time to act is now. We need to work to lower the level of transmission in the community.

We ask that all of us as a community continue to work hard collectively. Please continue social distancing, avoid large crowds, stay away from house parties and wear masks.

We thank you for your patience during this challenging time.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Sanmi Areola".

Sanmi Areola, PhD  
Director, Department of Health and Environment

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joseph LeMaster".

Joseph LeMaster MD MPH  
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