



News Release

Unified Government Public Relations
701 N. 7th Street, Room 620
Kansas City, Kansas 66101

Dave Reno, Interim Public Information Officer

(913) 573-5307

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Medical Officer Issues Order Prohibiting Wyandotte County Public Schools from Opening to In-Person Classes Until After Labor Day, 2020

The move comes in response to growing concerns about the safety of students and teachers

Dr. Allen Greiner, Wyandotte County's Chief Medical Officer, issued a new Health Order prohibiting public school buildings within the County from opening to in-person classes until after Labor Day, September 7, 2020 to ensure educators have sufficient time to prepare for school re-opening.

This Order becomes effective at 12:01 AM on July 28, 2020 and remains in effect until COVID-19 pandemic conditions in Wyandotte County are such as to warrant a change or modification.

Today's move comes in response to growing concerns about the health and safety of school-aged children, young adults, and their teachers. It is also in response to the dramatic increase in the number of new COVID-19 cases seen throughout the greater Kansas City metropolitan area and safety concerns voiced by local leaders and parents.

"Last month, we worked closely with our local schools to start planning for the 2020-2021 school year," said Dr. Erin Corriveau, Deputy Medical Officer with the Unified Government's Public Health Department (UGPHD). "A committee of educators from schools across our County have collaborated with public health experts to develop standards for each re-opening phase of our schools, as part of the ReStart WyCo Plan. We are still fighting to curb the spread of COVID-19 in our community, and we could find ourselves at different re-opening phases over the course of the school year. This additional guidance will help our schools keep their students, faculty, and staff as safe as possible, no matter what re-opening phase we are in."

The new Health Order is an extension of previous guidance, and it applies to public schools within Wyandotte County's jurisdiction. This includes:

- Bonner Springs/Edwardsville Unified School District (USD 204)
- Kansas City, Kansas Public Schools (USD 500)
- Piper School District (USD 203)
- Turner Unified School District (USD 202)

“The decision to prohibit schools from opening to in-person classes until after September 7 was not made lightly, as we know that in-person socialization plays an important role in the longer-term positive health impacts on individuals and our community as a whole,” said Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer with the UGPHD. “This Order was issued to protect our children, young adults, teachers, and those populations most vulnerable to COVID-19 in Wyandotte County. This Order does not prohibit distance learning, so all schools may resume virtual classes as soon as they would like.”

While subject to amendment if future medical data requires enhanced measures, this Order mandates the following:

- All schoolchildren and educators must wear masks while inside and in outdoor groups at all times. Masks **must** be worn outdoors when 6 feet distance cannot be maintained, otherwise, masks wearing may be *temporarily* relaxed.
- Hand sanitizer should be used by students and teachers several times daily
- Social distancing of at least 6 feet between children and educators should be maintained
- Cohorting should be ensured at every grade level, such that grades will be siloed with one or a small number of educator/supervisor during class sessions.
- The use of outdoor space as much as possible for coursework learning, physical education, music and singing is encouraged. Social distance of 6 feet or more must be maintained when outdoors. Masks must be worn outdoors when 6ft social distance cannot be maintained.
- Children should be cohorted, but they also must be physically spaced out throughout entire buildings/facilities/campuses so that schools achieve 50% less density of students in available spaces. Schools may use multiple methods to achieve 50% less density of students in the physical spaces they have available to them – This does not necessarily mean that there are half as many kids in attendance, rather it can be the same number of kids but spaced out into twice the total amount of space that would typically be utilized. This may be achieved creatively such as examples below, or other suggestions will be accepted as well:
 - a. 1st – 7th graders back to school full-time, 8th – 12th grade distance learning full-time; or
 - b. Children spaced within the school such that non-traditional spaces may be used as educational space such as gymnasiums, group rooms, band/singing rooms, etc.; or
 - c. cohort A and B rotate days physically present at the school – i.e. every other day schooling
 - d. **School districts in Wyandotte County will be required to submit their plan to comply with the health department for approval before implementation in the schools.**

You can find additional data and resources on COVID-19 in Wyandotte County by going to wycokck.org/COVID-19 or by calling 3-1-1.

Media Inquiries: Janell Friesen, Public Information Officer
Unified Government Public Health Department
COVID-19 media requests: (913) 573-6727
All other Health Department media requests: (913) 573-6703
jfriesen@wycokck.org