



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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Unified Government Public Health Department Issues Recommendations on Winter Sports and Activities in Wyandotte County

In a letter sent to superintendents of Wyandotte County school districts this morning, the Unified Government Public Health Department (UGPHD) outlined guidance on winter sports and activities in Wyandotte County.

This new guidance on winter sports is not a Health Officer Order, but a set of recommendations to help reduce the potential for COVID-19 spread. It is up to individual school boards to decide whether or not to follow these recommendations.

The UGPHD developed this guidance based on COVID-19 data, trends in COVID-19 spread within schools and sports/activities, and ongoing conversations between the UGPHD and local school leaders. The letter was signed by Juliann VanLiew, Director of the Unified Government Public Health Department; Dr. Allen Greiner, Chief Medical Officer of the Unified Government Public Health Department; Dr. Erin Corriveau, Deputy Medical Officer of the Unified Government Public Health Department, and Elizabeth Groenweghe, Chief Epidemiologist with the Unified Government Public Health Department.

The UG Public Health Department outlined the following recommendations to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 among students this winter:

- **Primary recommendation:** The letter strongly recommended that schools do not allow indoor sports or activities such as basketball or wrestling, based upon the level of community transmission and consequently, the risks involved.
 - The letter noted that engaging in these indoor activities increases the chance of widespread transmission in schools.
- In their **second recommendation**, the UG health experts outlined guidance for schools and sports/activities clubs that choose to not follow the primary recommendation. These secondary recommendations outline precautions to help reduce the risk of disease transmission, including:
 - Carefully cohorting participating students
 - Quickly identifying infections and taking steps to prevent spread of the virus to others
 - Limiting spectator attendance to immediate family only
 - Regularly monitoring for symptoms among students, coaches and staff

In the letter, these health experts warned that the coming winter months (and thus, colder temperatures) will force most outdoor sports activities indoors, creating the opportunity for a significant increase in the spread of COVID-19. They expect to see an even larger increase in spread of the virus related to indoor gathering around upcoming holidays.

“One place where we have the best chance to control the increased spread of the virus is within our schools,” the letter states. “Our overarching goal has always been to protect the health and well-being of students, teachers, school staff and families by carefully considering all risks and weighing them against the benefits of social interactions and learning modes.”

The UG Health Department officials pledged to continue to work with school leaders and school nursing staff to prevent transmission of the virus and respond to any infections or outbreaks as necessary. They urged school leaders to continue to enforce proper social distancing, proper wearing of masks or facial covers and cohorting students.

Learn more about COVID-19 in Wyandotte County at wycokck.org/COVID-19 or by calling 3-1-1.

Media Inquiries:

Janell Friesen, Public Information Officer
Unified Government Public Health Department
(913) 573-6703
jfriesen@wycokck.org

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