



## **KSHSAA Considerations for Coronavirus Transmission Risk Mitigation**

**As of March 23, 2021**

The physical and psychosocial benefits of education-based activity participation are numerous. Students who participate in school activities learn life skills and lessons in an environment that cannot be duplicated. The academic achievements, social and leadership skills, as well as overall mental health are known to be greatly enhanced in students who participate in a school activity compared to those who do not. The coronavirus pandemic has resulted in thousands of Kansas students missing out on these life-shaping educational experiences over the past several months. **The risk of coronavirus transmission remains present to some degree through participation in school activities.** Students and their families, along with school personnel must recognize these risks and implement best practices to reasonably mitigate these risks. Participation in school activities is voluntary and every individual will need to evaluate the risk versus the benefits of activity participation. Those immunocompromised students and staff, or those who live with family members with elevated health concerns, should evaluate associated risks of participation and may choose not to participate.

The primary means of coronavirus transmission is through respiratory droplets. Recent data suggests children older than 10 years may spread COVID-19 as efficiently as adults. Risk mitigation strategies should be aimed at reducing the likelihood of a person's respiratory droplets coming in contact with another person. Every school and every activity are different. Certain mitigation strategies may be feasible in one school or for one activity, but not another.

It is recommended all schools identify a team to design, implement and oversee an infection risk mitigation strategy for their co-curricular activity program which may also include contact tracing strategies. This group is responsible to disseminate the constantly changing information and continually consider how best to **implement ALL reasonable risk mitigation strategies.** Schools must remain in consultation with their local health departments and medical personnel to review and evaluate strategies applicable to their unique facilities and activities. The following coronavirus risk mitigation best practices are provided for consideration and in support of all member schools.



## Pillars of Coronavirus Transmission Risk Mitigation

### 1. Universal Guidelines/Personal Hygiene

- ANYONE feeling sick should stay home and contact their healthcare provider. Participating while symptomatic could potentially jeopardize the entire activities program in their school and other schools for an extended period of time.
- Maintain social distancing (6') when possible.
- **(Revised 2/11/21):** All participants (including but not limited to athletes, coaches, officials, spectators, support staff and all others attending/participating in school activities) shall wear a face covering in the manner it is intended to be worn (for purpose of COVID-19 risk mitigation) while at the event venue and for duration of the event. The only exception is provided for athletes during the time they are competing and for officials during active play. Participants and/or officials may choose to wear a mask during active play unless it poses a safety risk.

**(New 3/23/21):** *KSHSAA Executive Board interpretation (March 23, 2021): Any participant (including but not limited to athletes, coaches, officials, spectators, support staff and all others attending/participating in school activities) outdoors, who is able to maintain a minimum of six feet of social distancing would not be required to wear a face covering. Adherence to a more restrictive local health authority or school district policy is supported and expected.*

Additional face covering guidelines for Spirit and Pep Band activities:

[Spirit](#)

[Pep Band](#)

Face covering posters available for use at events:

[11 x 17 Poster](#)

[8.5 x 11 Poster](#)

- Cover your mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing with a tissue or cough/sneeze into your elbow.
- Frequent hand washing for 20 seconds with soap and water or using a hand sanitizer with a minimum of 60% alcohol.
- Keep your hands away from your face.
- Participants should shower, change, and launder workout clothing as soon as possible after an activity.

### 2. Education and Communication

- **Establish a communication network with your county health department or local public health authority.**
- Schools should create a team that oversees risk mitigation policy and implementation for their school's co-curricular activity program. Team members may include the athletic director, other building administrators, school nurse, athletic trainer, select coaches (head and assistant), local physicians/medical professionals and a representative from the county health department.



- (New 8/6/20): Recognize signs and symptoms of mental health challenges and psychological distress in students due to the ongoing pandemic situation. Be prepared to support these students with resources and proper referrals to school or community mental health professionals. Additional information can be found [HERE](#).
- All school personnel and students should be educated on the [signs and symptoms of COVID-19](#). Posters are available through the CDC website and should be posted throughout the school.
- Prominently display [standard daily precautions](#) throughout school facilities and promote healthy habits.
- Students and staff must be encouraged to report symptoms immediately. Participating while symptomatic could potentially jeopardize the entire activities program in their school and other schools for an extended period of time.
- Understand and identify the high-risk population. High risk individuals should evaluate their level of participation in school activities. This group includes those 65 years of age or older and people of any age with underlying medical conditions, including chronic lung disease, moderate to severe asthma, serious heart conditions, severe obesity, diabetes, chronic kidney disease, liver disease or are otherwise immunocompromised.
- Establish a communication plan within your school to address necessary information updates for coaches, staff and students.
- Establish a communication plan in which you contact opposing schools one week in advance of competition to share health concerns and geographically proximate restrictions and expectations. This communication should be initiated by the host school and may be facilitated by use of *KSHSAA Form D*.

### 3. Screening and Exposure Protocol

- Prior to athletic participation, student-athletes and their parents should fill out the *KSHSAA COVID-19 Questionnaire* and submit it to their school. The student should obtain written clearance by a medical provider prior to participating in sports **ONLY IF they answer yes** to any of the questions. This questionnaire should be distributed to students in advance of the season, providing enough time to obtain the additional medical clearance if necessary. If necessary, this written clearance is in addition to the annual pre-participation physical exam.
- (Revised 2/11/21): Coaches, administrators and school healthcare personnel should continually educate and regularly remind students of the need to report illness symptoms immediately. Each athletic/activity program should evaluate the necessity and practicality of using a formal daily screening process ([sample daily monitoring form](#)). Coaches and athletic trainers must maintain an effective communication protocol with school nurses/health personnel regarding any illnesses among student athletes.
- If a formal screening process is used, any documentation should be maintained in a confidential manner and not shared with all staff, parents or teammates unless necessary due to a confirmed exposure.
- When traveling to an event, remind your student participants immediately prior to leaving school for the contest of the need to report any illness symptoms. This will reduce the likelihood of one of your students exhibiting symptoms while participating at an away contest where they may not have a parent/guardian available to take them home.



- Any person reporting or exhibiting COVID-19 signs or symptoms without other obvious explanations should not be allowed to take part in any school activity and should be immediately sent home and instructed to contact their healthcare provider.
- Anyone who tests positive for COVID-19 must be isolated until they meet the criteria for release set by the KDHE or the local health department. They must also obtain written clearance by a medical provider before returning to participation.
- Any individual who has had close contact exposure (defined by the KDHE as less than 6' of physical distance for 10 minutes or longer, or if there was exposure to respiratory secretions such as being coughed or sneezed on) with a person who has tested positive for COVID-19 should immediately self-quarantine and contact their primary care physician or local public health officials for guidance. While in self-quarantine, the person should be alert for symptoms including fever, cough or shortness of breath and contact their healthcare provider if these symptoms appear.

An exposure is considered close contact with a COVID-19 positive person up to two days before their symptom onset (or if asymptomatic, up to two days before their specimen collection) until the time they are no longer required to self-isolate.

- Those not identified as a close contact may continue to participate. Contacts of a close contact do not need to be excluded from activities unless they are also considered a close contact.
- **(New 8/20/20):** Students who have recovered from a COVID-19 infection or have been unable to participate for an extended period of time due to quarantine or sport cessation should follow these [Return to Participation Guidelines](#).
- (Revised 1/12/21): Any student who has traveled to a [KDHE identified restricted area](#) should self-quarantine and not participate in school activities for the amount of time indicated by the local county health department or the KDHE.

#### 4. Illness Protocol

- Students and staff must be completely honest with symptom reporting and appropriate follow through, or risk jeopardizing the entire activities program in their school and other schools for an extended period of time.
- **(Revised 9/24/20):** Establish a plan for handling a symptomatic participant during practice or competition. The student should be immediately removed to an isolated quarantine area and monitored by school staff until a parent or guardian arrives.
- Identify a communication plan with parents/guardians for a student who reports COVID-19 signs/symptoms.
- Identify a communication plan with your county health department if anyone associated with your school's activity program tests positive for COVID-19.

#### 5. Activity Considerations

- **Practice/Team Activities**
  - Maintain common groups as much as possible; practice outside whenever possible; spread out for team meetings; minimize full team interactions with teammates in close proximity.
  - Practice and workout groups should remain static throughout a season insofar as possible.



- Masks/face coverings should be worn at all times by all personnel, including students, except when students are directly participating in the activity.

**(New 3/23/21):** *KSHSAA Executive Board interpretation (March 23, 2021): Any participant (including but not limited to athletes, coaches, officials, spectators, support staff and all others attending/participating in school activities) **outdoors**, who is able to maintain a minimum of six feet of social distancing would not be required to wear a face covering. Adherence to a more restrictive local health authority or school district policy is supported and expected.*

## – Competitions

- Masks/face coverings should be worn at all times by all personnel, including students, except when students are directly participating in the activity.

- Scheduling:** Consider a reduced schedule for all activities; consider reduction in travel - whenever possible, play closer to home school site; consider reduction in the size of invitational events (those you attend and those you host), or tier those events so not all teams are at venue at the same time.

(NEW 1/12/21): **Per KSHSAA Board of Directors action on 11/24/20:**

**Winter sports interscholastic activity programs shall not sponsor nor participate in large in-person invitational tournaments during the 2020-21 school year. For the purpose of this rule, this includes any MS/JH event with more than four schools playing concurrently; no more than four high schools playing concurrently for basketball; and wrestling being limited to no more than 8 teams or 112 individual participants.**

- Contracts for games:** While every effort should be made to play contests with contracts in place; if a team is unable to play due to health concerns, see sport specific guidance on impact of win/loss records.

- Sportsmanship**

- \* Prior to competition: demonstrate respect to officials and opposing team/coach with appropriate gestures other than physical contact.
- \* During competition: Support and recognize good play with clapping, thumbs up, etc.
- \* Conclusion of competition: in lieu of handshakes, develop and utilize an appropriate sign of respect and sportsmanship that does not include handshake or other physical contact; suggestions include head nod, chest thump, salute, etc.

- Officials**

- \* Provide clean locker room with space for them to spread out; provide hand sanitizer and/or appropriate personal hygiene items (soap, towels, etc.).
- \* Provide place for officials to meet outside of the locker room away from the teams/crowds for pregame, halftime, and postgame discussions.
- \* Provide appropriate security while in “open” areas.
- \* Provide “sign-in” and/or payment with minimal invasion of personal space yet providing protection of confidential information.

- (Revised 8/5/20) **Contracts for officials:** Leagues should adopt policies concerning games which are not played due to impact of COVID-19 on scheduled activities. Considerations may include timing of cancelation, possible loyalty “fees”, and ability to reschedule officials who lost a contracted game.



- (Revised 1/12/21) **Event Staff:** Initiate efficient protocols with essential staff only; staff are required to wear a face covering.
- Admission:** Consider cashless admission utilizing digital tickets or home-site season pass; provide plexiglass or other barriers for ticket staff.
- Concessions:** Follow food service guidelines and provide limited menu with pre-packaged foods and bottled drinks. Limit cash sales, use credit card option when available.
- Fan attendance:** Policies should be made in consultation with your local health authorities. If crowd size is limited, consideration should allow for appropriate representation of fans from both/all schools participating. Ensure crowds do not have access to competition area or competitors before/during/following competition.

(NEW 2/3/21): **Per KSHSAA Board of Directors action on 1/20/21:**

**Beginning January 29 until the end of winter activities regular season this school year, a maximum of four spectators per participant will be permitted to attend with appropriate social distancing required. Local school districts may choose to have stricter limitations based on seating and local health department guidelines.**

**For all other periods, the BOD approved the following on 11/24/20:**

For the period through the remainder of the winter activity regular season and postseason for the 2020-21 school year, attendance shall be limited to allow for appropriate distancing for the facility and in accordance with local admission and attendance policies.

– **Transportation**

- Adhere to BOE policies and KSDE considerations for transportation to/from practices and contests.
- Clean vehicles before and after each usage; suggestions include single individual per bus seat; staggered bus seating as available; parent support for transporting own child (if within BOE policy).
- Masks should be worn during transport to and from events if social distancing cannot be maintained.

**Make every reasonable effort to follow KSHSAA activity specific risk mitigation considerations.**

**6. Facility and Equipment Management**

- Set up each facility to allow for appropriate social distancing; utilize breadth of available facility space for each event.
- Follow [CDC recommendations](#) for cleaning and disinfecting community facilities.
- Adequate cleaning schedules should be created and implemented for all athletic facilities to mitigate any communicable diseases.
- Hygiene stations containing hand sanitizer, facial tissues, gloves and surface disinfectants should be available throughout facilities.
- Prior to an individual or groups of individuals entering a facility, hard surfaces within that facility should be wiped down and sanitized (chairs, furniture in meeting rooms, locker rooms, weight room equipment, bathrooms, athletic training room tables, etc.).
- Commonly touched areas should be cleaned multiple times throughout the day.



- Adhere to local school policy for locker room usage.
  - If locker rooms are used, precautions should be taken to ensure large groups do not congregate. Keep different teams within your school from being in the locker room at the same time.
  - Locker assignments should be established to maintain as much social distancing as possible and to ensure participants from different sports are not coming into contact with each other; maintain consistent bubbles/groupings of students in locker together.
  - Establish a locker room cleaning schedule with your custodial staff which ensures appropriate cleaning is taking place each time a group leaves the locker room.
  - Practice and competition attire should be cleaned after use; equipment cleaned before storing.
  - Any equipment such as weight benches, athletic pads, etc. having holes with exposed foam should be covered by a non-porous material that can be effectively cleaned.
  - Shared equipment should be cleaned thoroughly before use, between users and at the end of the session.
  - Students should use individualized hydration containers (e.g., water bottles, jugs, disposable cups).
  - Group hydration devices (water cows, water fountains, hoses, etc.) should not be used other than to refill personal water containers. During refilling, appropriate social distancing should be maintained and the equipment should be regularly cleaned.
  - There should be no shared athletic towels, clothing or shoes between students.
  - All athletic equipment, including balls, should be cleaned intermittently during practices and competitions per the manufacturer's guidelines.
- [Spalding Ball Cleaning Guidelines](#)
- [Wilson Ball Cleaning Guidelines](#)
- Athletic equipment such as bats, batting helmets and catchers gear should be cleaned between each use and not shared if possible.

The KSHSAA continually evaluates the statewide COVID-19 case metrics, CDC and KDHE guidelines, and will make adjustments to these considerations detailed above if indicated.



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