

KDHE Guidance for Summer Camp Planning and Operations

February 3, 2021

Acknowledging that there are still a lot of unknowns about what the COVID-19 pandemic will look like in the summer of 2021, the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) recognizes that many camp organizers are currently in the process of planning and offer the following guidance for safer planning. Given the toll of COVID-19 around the world and in the United States, and the emergence of new and more infectious variants, the safest option is still to avoid large group activities.

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. While the risk of COVID-19 spread increases in youth camp settings, there are a number of actions youth camp administrators can take to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread during camp sessions and activities. After reviewing the actions and strategies in this document, camp administrators may consider using CDC's [Youth Programs and Camps Readiness and Planning Tool](#) to protect campers, staff, and communities. This comprehensive checklist tool is useful in making preparations to promote healthy behaviors, environments, and operations that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

Guiding Principles

⇒ The more people a camper or staff member interacts with, the closer the physical interaction, the more sharing of equipment there is by multiple people, and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread. The risk of COVID-19 spread increases in youth camp settings as follows:

Lowest risk

- Small groups/cohorts (of 10 or fewer campers) stay together all day, each day.
- Campers remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects.
- Outdoor activities are prioritized.
- All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county community).

More Risk

- Campers mix between groups but remain at least 6 feet apart and do not share objects.
- Outdoor activities are prioritized.
- All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county community).

Even More Risk

- Campers mix between groups and do not remain spaced apart.
- All campers are from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county community).

Highest Risk

- Campers mix between groups and do not remain spaced apart.
- All campers are **NOT** from the local geographic area (e.g., city, town, county community).

Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to encourage behaviors that reduce the spread of COVID-19.

⇒ Staying Home when Appropriate

- Educate staff, campers, and families about when they should stay home and when they can return to activity.
- [Individuals should stay home](#) if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#). Develop policies that encourage sick staff members to stay at home without fear of reprisal, and ensure staff are aware of these policies.
- Anyone who has recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 within the last 14 days should also [stay home and monitor their health](#), and follow [KDHE quarantine guidance](#).

⇒ Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette

- Teach and reinforce [handwashing](#) with soap and water for at least 20 seconds
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used (for staff and older children who can safely use hand sanitizer).
- Require everyone to wash hands upon arrival, at regular intervals throughout the day, and before and after meals.
- Do not allow spitting and encourage everyone to cover their coughs and sneezes with a tissue or use the inside of their elbow. Used tissues should be thrown in the trash and hands washed immediately with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
 - If soap and water are not readily available, hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol can be used.

⇒ Cloth Face Coverings

- Teach and reinforce the use of [cloth face coverings](#). They may offer some protection to the wearer and are also meant to protect those around the wearer, in case they are infected with the virus that causes COVID-19.
- Require staff and campers to wear face coverings except for when eating, playing a musical instrument, or when outside and able to maintain a safe physical distance. Face coverings are most essential in times when physical distancing is difficult.
- People wearing face coverings should be reminded to not touch the face covering and to [wash their hands](#) frequently. Information should be provided to all participants on the [proper use, removal, and washing of cloth face coverings](#).
- Campers and staff should bring a minimum of one face covering per day of camp; two per day is preferred to account for the first mask getting wet or soiled. Campers should keep worn/dirty and

clean/unworn face coverings in separate sealed containers, such as a plastic bag.

- Face coverings should be marked with camper's name or initials.
- Face coverings should never be shared.
- Note: Cloth face coverings should **not** be placed on:
 - Babies and children younger than 2 years old;
 - Anyone who has trouble breathing or is unconscious;
 - Anyone who is incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove the cloth face covering without assistance.

⇒ **Adequate Supplies**

- Support healthy hygiene by providing supplies including accessible sinks, soap, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch/foot pedal trash cans (preferably covered). If hand washing facilities are not available in some areas, provide hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.
- Require external vendors to wear face coverings at all times.

⇒ **Signs and Messages**

- Post signs in highly visible locations (e.g., at entrances and exits, and in restrooms) that [promote everyday protective measures](#) and describe how to [stop the spread](#) of germs such as by [properly washing hands](#) and [properly wearing a cloth face covering](#).
- Broadcast [regular announcements on public announcement \(PA\) system](#)
- Include COVID-19 prevention messages (for example, [videos](#)) about behaviors that prevent spread of COVID-19 in all communications. This could include links, videos, and prevention messages in emails, on camp websites, and through the camp's [social media accounts](#).
- Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on [CDC's communication resources](#) main page.

Maintaining Healthy Environments

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy environments.

⇒ **Cleaning and Disinfection**

- [Clean and disinfect](#) frequently touched surfaces (e.g., drinking fountains, sink handles, door handles) at least daily, or between uses as much as possible. Use of shared objects and equipment (e.g., balls, bats, art supplies) should be limited, or cleaned between use by each individual if possible.
- If [shared transportation](#) is being utilized, vehicles should be cleaned and disinfected at least daily or between use as much as possible.
- Develop a schedule for increased, routine cleaning and disinfection.
- Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaners and disinfectants](#), including storing products securely away from children. Use products that meet [EPA disinfection criteria](#).

- Identify a responsible adult to ensure proper cleaning and disinfection of objects and equipment, particularly for any shared equipment or frequently touched surfaces.
- Cleaning products should not be used near children, and staff should ensure that there is adequate ventilation when using these products to prevent children or themselves from inhaling toxic fumes.
- Use gloves when removing garbage bags or handling and disposing of trash. [Wash hands after removing gloves.](#)

⇒ **Shared Objects**

- Discourage sharing of items that are difficult to [clean, sanitize, or disinfect.](#)
- Do not let youth share towels, clothing, or other items they use to wipe their faces or hands.
- Make sure there are adequate supplies of shared items to minimize sharing of equipment to the extent possible (e.g., protective gear, art supplies, balls, bats, water bottles); otherwise, limit use of supplies and equipment to one group of youth at a time and clean and disinfect between use.
 - Keep student's belongings separated from others' and in individually labeled containers, bags, or areas. Avoid sharing electronic devices among campers.

⇒ **Ventilation**

- If activities take place inside, ensure ventilation systems or fans operate properly. Increase circulation of outdoor air as much as possible, for example by opening windows and doors. Do not open windows and doors if doing so poses a safety or health risk (e.g., risk of falling or triggering asthma symptoms).

⇒ **Water Systems**

- To minimize the risk of [Legionnaires' disease](#) and other diseases associated with water, [take steps](#) to ensure that all water systems and features (e.g., drinking fountains, decorative fountains) are safe to use after a prolonged facility shutdown. Drinking fountains should be cleaned and disinfected but encourage staff and players to bring their own water to minimize touching water fountains.

⇒ **Promote Physical Distancing**

- Ensure at least 6 feet of space between any seating arrangements.
- If nap or rest times are part of the schedule, ensure naptime mats are assigned to individual children, are sanitized before and after use, and are spaced out as much as possible, ideally 6 feet apart. Place campers head-to-toe to ensure distance between faces.
- For sports, space players at least 6 feet apart on the field while participating in the sport (e.g., during warmup, skill building activities, simulation drills)

- Discourage unnecessary physical contact, such as high fives, handshakes, fist bumps, or hugs.
- Prioritize outdoor, as opposed to indoor, play as much as possible.
- Limit the use of carpools or van pools.
 - If shared transportation is utilized, create distance between students (e.g., seat children one child per row, skip rows) when possible.
- If facilities must be shared for activities, consider increasing the amount of time between activities to allow for one group to leave before another group enters the facility. If possible, allow time for cleaning and/or disinfecting.
- Provide physical guides, such as signs and tape on floors or playing fields, sneeze guards and partitions between work stations, to make sure that everyone remains at least 6 feet apart.

⇒ **Communal Spaces**

- Close shared spaces such as dining halls and playgrounds with shared playground equipment, if possible. Otherwise, stagger use of shared spaces and [clean and disinfect](#) between use.
 - Multiple cohorts may use the same facilities at the same time, as long as 30 feet of distancing can be maintained between cohorts.
- Prohibit water-based activities and contact sports. For more information on maintaining water-based facilities, see [KDHE](#) and [CDC's](#) recommendations.

⇒ **Food Service**

- Have campers bring their own meals as feasible, and eat in separate areas or with their smaller group, instead of in a communal dining hall or cafeteria. Ensure the safety of [children with food allergies](#).
- Ensure individuals are not sharing items such as water bottles or food.
- Use disposable food service items (utensils, dishes). If disposable items are not feasible or desirable, ensure that all non-disposable food service items are handled with gloves and washed with dish soap and hot water or in a dishwasher. Individuals should [wash their hands](#) after removing their gloves or after directly handling used food service items.
- If food is offered at any event, have pre-packaged boxes or bags for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils and ensure the [children with food allergies](#).

Maintaining Healthy Operations

Camp administrators should consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

⇒ **Testing Strategy**

- For camps lasting two days or less, test all campers, staff and volunteers using a point of care (POC) antigen or PCR test upon entry to camp. This is considered screening testing of people without symptoms and without known exposure.
- For camps lasting longer than two days, test all campers, staff and volunteers using POC antigen or PCR test upon entry to camp and every other day for the duration of the camp stay. This is considered screening testing of people without symptoms and without known exposure.
- All camps should consider having some testing capacity on site for staff, volunteers and campers who become symptomatic with COVID-19 symptoms during the camp. This is considered diagnostic testing of symptomatic people. Having this capacity readily available allows for the isolation of cases and the identification and quarantine of close contacts quickly to stop the spread of the virus in the camp.
- The state of Kansas has resources available to provide POC antigen tests (Abbott BinaxNOW cards) at no cost to camp administrators. Any resource requests to the state must go through county emergency managers.
- Online training on how to properly administer the Abbott BinaxNOW tests and reporting requirements is required if camp administration is requesting BinaxNOW cards through the state of Kansas. If camp administration is procuring another testing platform, administrators should be aware that all COVID-19 test results, positives and negatives, are reportable to the Kansas Department of Health and Environment.
- For more information on ordering BinaxNOW antigen tests and reporting requirements, please contact Lacey.Kennett@ks.gov.

⇒ **Recognize Signs and Symptoms**

- Perform daily health checks (e.g., [symptom checking](#)) of staff, volunteers and campers safely and respectfully, and in accordance with any applicable privacy and confidentiality laws and regulations.
 - Pre-screening health checks might also be considered. Campers and staff should self-monitor for 14 days and conduct pre-screening activities such as:
 - Taking and recording their own temperature for 14 days before camp (with assistance of parents/guardians)
 - Self-screening for symptoms
 - Possible health screening questions include:
 - *Have you been in contact with anyone with COVID-19 in the past 14 days?*
 - *In the past 24 hours, have you experienced a persistent cough or shortness of breath?*
 - *In the past 24 hours, have you had any of the following symptoms? New loss of taste/smell, body aches, sore*

throat, fever, chills, diarrhea, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache

- Camp administrators may use additional examples of screening methods found in CDC's supplemental [Guidance for Child Care Programs that Remain Open](#) as a guide for screening children, and CDC's [General Business FAQs](#) for screening staff.

⇒ **Protections for Staff and Campers who are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness from COVID-19**

- Offer options for staff at [higher risk](#) of severe illness from COVID-19 (risk increases with age, and people of any age with certain medical conditions are at higher risk), such as telework and modified job responsibilities.
- Offer options for campers at higher risk for severe illness that limit exposure risk (such as virtual learning opportunities)
- Limit attendance to staff and campers who live in the local geographic area (e.g., community, city, town, or county) to reduce risk of spread from areas with higher levels of COVID-19.
- Put in place policies that protect the privacy of people at [higher risk for severe illness](#) regarding underlying medical conditions.

⇒ **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together (Cohorting)**

- Keep campers together in small groups (10 or fewer campers) with dedicated staff and make sure that each group avoids mixing with other groups as much as possible.
- Campers should be assigned to a cohort with other campers from their same household/community.

⇒ **Staggered Scheduling**

- Stagger arrival and drop-off times or locations by cohort (group) or put in place other protocols to limit contact between groups and with guardians as much as possible.
- Require participants to enroll in advance and complete paperwork online, where possible. Encourage contactless login and limit exposure throughout entry process.

⇒ **Gatherings, Visitors, and Field Trips**

- Avoid group events, such as games, competitions, or social gatherings, where spacing of at least 6 feet between people cannot be maintained.
- Limit any nonessential visitors, volunteers, and activities involving external groups or organizations as much as possible – especially with individuals not from the local geographic area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).
- Avoid activities and events such as field trips and special performances.

⇒ **Designated COVID-19 Point of Contact**

- Designate a staff person such as a nurse or healthcare provider to be responsible for responding to COVID-19 concerns. All camp staff and families should know who this person is and how to contact them.

⇒ **Communication Systems**

- Put systems in place for:
 - Consistent with applicable law and privacy policies, having staff and families of campers (as feasible) self-report to the organization if they have [symptoms](#) of COVID-19, a positive test for COVID-19, or were exposed to someone with COVID-19 within the last 14 days in accordance with [health information sharing regulations for COVID-19](#) (e.g. see “Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts” in the **Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick section below**), and other applicable laws and regulations.
 - Notifying staff and families of camp closures and restrictions in place to limit COVID-19 exposure (e.g., limited hours of operation).

⇒ **Leave (Time Off) Policies**

- Implement flexible sick leave policies and practices for staff that enable employees to stay home when they are sick, have been exposed, or [caring for someone who is sick](#).
 - Examine and revise policies for leave, telework, and employee compensation.
 - Leave policies should be flexible and not be punitive to people for taking time off and should allow sick employees to stay home and away from co-workers. Leave policies should also account for employees who need to stay home with their children if there are school or childcare closures, or to care for sick family members.
- Develop policies for return-to-camp after COVID-19 illness. KDHE’s [isolation and quarantine policy](#) can inform these policies.

⇒ **Back-up Staffing Plan**

- Cross-train staff and create a roster of trained back-up personnel.
- Train all staff on all safety protocols.
 - Conduct training virtually, or ensure that [physical distancing](#) is maintained during training.

⇒ **Sharing Facilities**

- Encourage any organizations that share or use camp facilities to also follow these considerations, and limit shared use, if feasible.

⇒ **Support Coping and Resilience**

- Encourage employees and campers to take breaks from watching, reading, or listening to news stories about COVID-19, including social media if they are feeling overwhelmed or distressed.

- Promote healthy eating, exercising, getting sleep, and finding time to unwind.
- Encourage employees and campers to talk with people they trust about their concerns and how they are feeling.
- Consider posting signs for the national distress hotline: 1-800-985-5990.

Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

Camp administrators may consider implementing several strategies to prepare for when someone gets sick.

⇒ Advise Staff and Families of Sick Students of Home Isolation Criteria

- Sick staff members, volunteers or students should not return until they have met KDHE's [criteria to discontinue home isolation](#).

⇒ Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick

- Individuals should notify the designated COVID-19 point of contact if they (staff) or their child (families) become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#), test positive for COVID-19, or have been [exposed](#) to someone with COVID-19 symptoms or a confirmed or suspected case.
- Immediately separate staff and campers with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath). Have a designated area set up to isolate sick campers or staff until they can be safely transported off-site.
- Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.
- Establish procedures for safely transporting anyone who is sick to their home or to a healthcare facility. If you are calling an ambulance or bringing someone to the hospital, try to call first to alert them that the person may have COVID-19.

⇒ Clean and Disinfect

- Close off areas used by a sick person and do not use these areas until after [cleaning and disinfecting](#).
- Wait at least 24 hours before cleaning and disinfecting. If 24 hours is not feasible, wait as long as possible. Ensure [safe and correct use](#) and storage of [cleaning and disinfection products](#), including storing products securely away from children.

⇒ Notify Health Officials and Close Contacts

- In accordance with state and local laws and regulations, camp administrators should notify their local public health department immediately of any case of COVID-19.
- Inform those who have had [close contact](#) with a person diagnosed with COVID-19 to stay home and [self-monitor for symptoms](#), and follow [CDC guidance](#) if symptoms develop.

Special Considerations for Overnight Camps

In addition to the considerations listed above, sleep away camps should also consider:

- ⇒ Camps who are accepting campers from various geographic regions (e.g., community, city, town, county) should communicate that information to families.
- ⇒ Align mats or beds so that campers and staff sleep head-to-toe at least 6 feet apart.
 - Create physical barriers between sleepers, especially if a distance of 6 feet cannot be maintained.
- ⇒ Keep the same staff members assigned to a cabin or sleeping area throughout the program; do not rotate staff between cabins.
- ⇒ Monitor and enforce physical distancing and [healthy hygiene behaviors](#) throughout the day and night.
- ⇒ [Clean and disinfect](#) bathrooms regularly (e.g., in the morning and evening, after times of heavy use) using [EPA-registered disinfectants](#).
- ⇒ Encourage staff and campers to avoid placing toothbrushes or toiletries directly on counter surfaces or other shared surfaces.
- ⇒ Work with camp administrators, nurses, and other healthcare providers to identify an isolation room or area to separate anyone who exhibits COVID-like symptoms. If the camp has a nurse or healthcare provider, they should use [Standard and Transmission-Based Precautions](#) when caring for sick people.
- ⇒ Staff and campers with symptoms such as fever, cough, or runny nose at camp should immediately be separated. Individuals who are sick should go home or to a healthcare facility depending on how severe their symptoms are, and follow [CDC guidance for caring for oneself and others](#) who are sick.

Sources

1. [Suggestions for Youth and Summer Camps](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (January 4, 2021)
2. [Suggestions for Youth Programs and Camps: Readiness and Planning Tool](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2021)
3. [Field Guide for Camps on Implementation of CDC Guidance](#); Environmental Health and Engineering, Inc., prepared for American Camp Association and YMCA of the USA (January 21, 2021)
4. [Considerations for Youth Sports](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (May 29, 2020)
5. [Considerations for Schools](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (December 31, 2020)
6. [Children's day camps and youth sports camps](#); Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment (June 19, 2020)
7. [Guidance for Social Distancing in Youth and Student Programs](#); Minnesota Department of Health (January 7, 2021)
8. [Be Safe Summer Programs](#); Be Safe Chicago (June 2020)
9. [Summer Camp Safety Guidelines](#); YMCA of Greater St. Petersburg (2021)