

# KDHE Guidance for School Events

March 18, 2021

COVID-19 is mostly spread by respiratory droplets released when people talk, cough, or sneeze. Because the risk of COVID-19 spread increases in settings where people gather with others, KDHE does not recommend holding proms or other school events where 6 feet of distancing cannot be maintained. Restrictions on gathering sizes specific to your county should be followed when planning any event. If in-person events and gatherings are held, there are a number of actions that can be taken to help lower the risk of COVID-19 exposure and spread.

## Guiding Principles

- ⇒ The more people an individual interacts with at a gathering and the longer that interaction lasts, the higher the potential risk of becoming infected with COVID-19 and COVID-19 spreading.
- ⇒ The higher the level of community transmission in the area that the gathering is being held, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spreading during a gathering.
- ⇒ The risk of COVID-19 spreading at events and gatherings increases as follows:

### Lowest risk

- Virtual-only activities, events, and gatherings.

### More Risk

- Smaller outdoor and in-person gatherings in which individuals from different households remain spaced at least 6 feet apart, wear masks, do not share objects, and come from the same local area (e.g., community, town, city, or county).

### Higher Risk

- Medium-sized in person gatherings that are adapted to allow individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and with attendees coming from outside the local area.

### Highest Risk

- Large in-person gatherings where it is difficult for individuals to remain spaced at least 6 feet apart and attendees travel from outside the local area.

## Promoting Behaviors that Reduce Spread

Ensure these steps are taken to reduce the risk of attendees getting and spreading COVID-19:

- ⇒ **All attendees should correctly and consistently wear a mask or cloth face covering.**
  - KDHE recommends wearing a mask that fits snugly around the nose, mouth, and chin and has multiple layers of fabric. Alternatively, a thinner

disposable mask may be worn underneath a cloth face mask to improve the fit. For more information on mask guidance visit: <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/441/KDH-E-Mask-Guidance-PDF---3-1-21>.

- ⇒ **Stay at least 6 feet away from others who do not live in your household.**
- ⇒ **Staying Home when Appropriate**
  - Educate staff and attendees about when they should [stay home](#).
  - Individuals should stay home if they have tested positive for or are showing COVID-19 [symptoms](#).
  - Anyone who has recently had a [close contact](#) with a person with COVID-19 should also [stay home and monitor their health](#), and follow [KDHE quarantine guidance](#).
  - Consider developing flexible refund policies for attendees for events that involve a participation fee.
- ⇒ **Hand Hygiene and Respiratory Etiquette**
  - Require frequent [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.
  - Require everyone to wash hands upon arrival, at regular intervals throughout the event, and before and after consuming food and beverages.
  - 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.
- ⇒ **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 masks or 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](#)
  - Find freely available CDC print and digital resources on [CDC's communication resources](#) main page.

## Maintaining Healthy Environments

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) between uses as much as possible. Use of shared objects and equipment 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 for the duration of the event.
- 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](#).
- 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](#).

### ⇒ **Restrooms**

- Consider limiting the number of people who occupy the restroom at one time to allow for social distancing.
- Do not allow lines or crowds to form near the restroom without maintaining a distance of at least 6 feet from other people. It may be helpful to post signs or markers to help attendees maintain the appropriate social distance of at least 6 feet.
- Ensure that open restrooms are cleaned and disinfected regularly, as outlined in the previous section.
- Ensure restrooms are stocked with enough supplies for handwashing, including soap and water, paper towels, tissues, and no-touch trash cans. If sinks, soap, and water are unavailable, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol may be used. If you are providing portable toilets, also provide portable hand washing stations and touch-free hand sanitizer stations.

### ⇒ **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.

⇒ **Modified Layouts**

- Limit attendance or seating capacity to allow for social distancing, or host smaller events in larger rooms.
- For events such as graduations, offer a limited number of tickets for each student to ensure gathering size limits are not exceeded and appropriate distancing can be maintained.
- Use multiple entrances and exits and discourage crowded waiting areas.
- Block off rows or sections of seating in order to space people or immediate family groups at least 6 feet apart from one another.
- Eliminate lines if possible or encourage people to stay at least 6 feet apart by providing signs or other visual cues such as tape or chalk marks.
- Prioritize outdoor activities where social distancing can be maintained as much as possible.

⇒ **Modified Events**

- Outdoor events should be prioritized whenever possible.
- Consider hosting alternative event types where appropriate social distancing is easier to maintain:
  - Virtual prom events or YouTube live events
  - Online prom parties
  - Outdoor seated dinners
  - Outdoor moving screenings or concerts with food trucks

⇒ **Food Service**

- If event includes food service, refer to CDC's COVID-19 considerations for [restaurants and bars](#).
- Ensure individuals are not sharing items such as food and drinks.
- 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, or individually plated meals for each attendee instead of a buffet or family-style meal. Avoid sharing of foods and utensils.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces such as counters and tables.

## Maintaining Healthy Operations

Administrators may consider implementing several strategies to maintain healthy operations.

### ⇒ Testing Strategy

- Negative Test Results for Entry to Event
  - For events taking place in the morning, the evening before the event, test all event attendees, including staff, using a point of care (POC) antigen test.
  - For events taking place in the afternoon or evening, test all event attendees, including staff, on the morning of the event using a point of care (POC) antigen test.
  - Interpreting point of care antigen test results
    - A negative antigen test result can be taken to mean that the person is not currently infectious and can attend the event.
    - A positive antigen test result in someone who does not have any COVID-19 symptoms and has not been exposed to someone with COVID-19 disease in the last 14 days may be a false positive result. If the attendee still wishes to attend the event, they should attempt to get a confirmation PCR test done. Note that the confirmation PCR test needs to be on an FDA-authorized Nucleic Acid Amplification Test (NAAT). Examples of rapid NAAT PCR include the Abbott ID NOW and Cepheid platforms.
  - Following testing, attendees should make every reasonable attempt to restrict activities until the time of the event in order to avoid exposure between testing and the event.
  - The state of Kansas has resources available to provide point of care antigen tests (Abbott BinaxNOW cards) at no cost to school administrators. To request these tests, a school administrator should contact his or her county emergency manager. .
  - Online training on how to properly administer the Abbott BinaxNOW tests and reporting requirements is required if school administration is requesting BinaxNOW cards through the state of Kansas. If school 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](mailto:Lacey.Kennett@ks.gov).

- ⇒ **Identifying Small Groups and Keeping them Together (Cohorting)**
  - Keep attendees together in small groups (10 or fewer) with dedicated staff and make sure that each group avoids mixing with other groups as much as possible.
  - If attendees are in student cohorts for in-person education, consider mirroring these cohorts for events.
- ⇒ **Staggered Scheduling**
  - Consider staggering arrival times to avoid large groups at the start of the event.
  - Require participants to complete any necessary paperwork online before the event, where possible. Encourage contactless login and limit exposure throughout entry process, where appropriate.
- ⇒ **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 for the duration of the event. All attendees should be made aware of who this person is.

## Preparing for When Someone Gets Sick

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

- ⇒ **Isolate and Transport Those Who are Sick**
  - Attendees should notify the designated COVID-19 point of contact if they become sick with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) during the event.
  - Immediately separate attendees with COVID-19 [symptoms](#) (such as fever, cough, or shortness of breath). Have a designated area set up to isolate attendees until they can be safely transported off-site.
  - Attendees 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, 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.

*Sources*

1. [Events and Gatherings: Readiness and Planning Tool](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (December 15, 2020)
2. [Considerations for Events and Gatherings](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (February 18, 2021)
3. [Operational Strategy for K-12 Schools through Phased Mitigation](#); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (February 26, 2021)

