



Shawnee County Health Department

**Shawnee County Health Department**  
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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

07/02/2021

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Updated COVID-19 Recommendations from Local Health Officer**

**Topeka, Kan.** – Shawnee County Health Officer, Dr. Erin Locke, has issued new recommendations to continue mitigating the impact of COVID-19 on the Shawnee County community. These updated recommendations continue to be in accordance with recommendations from both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the State of Kansas. Recommendations continue to focus on the primary mitigation measures that have been shown to have the greatest impact on reducing the spread of COVID-19.

Vaccination rates have begun to slow down in Shawnee County. As of June 30, 2021 approximately 75,000 (43% of total population) Shawnee County residents have completed their vaccine series. Shawnee County continues to vaccinate at a rate slightly higher than the state of Kansas, however, the county is falling further behind the United States as a whole.

“With not yet half of Shawnee County residents fully vaccinated, the Delta variant has the potential to spread quickly through our community. I am particularly concerned for our children and our elderly, as it can cause severe disease and may not respond as well to treatment,” said Dr. Erin Locke. “I very strongly advise our unvaccinated residents to wear their masks and, if eligible, get vaccinated as soon as possible.”

According to the CDC, the Delta variant is 60% more transmissible than the Alpha variant, which was previously the dominant strain. The new variant appears to be spreading most quickly in communities that have the lowest vaccination rates. High vaccination rates not only prevent the spread of COVID-19, they also prevent new variants from developing.

Everyone is interested in continuing to experience the benefits of reduced community spread: seeing loved ones, enjoying summer, and safely getting kids back to school this fall. The vaccines continue to be extremely effective and safe, and the best way to keep us on the right track is for every eligible adult and child to get vaccinated.

The SCHD continues to encourage residents to take advantage of opportunities to receive a COVID-19 vaccine when they are able from an approved vaccine provider. Visit the SCHD Vaccine webpage ([http://www.snco.us/hd/COVID19\\_Vaccination.asp](http://www.snco.us/hd/COVID19_Vaccination.asp)) or CDC’s Vaccine Finder tool (<https://vaccinefinder.org/>) to locate the closest vaccinating provider to you.



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Additionally, it continues to be important to get tested for COVID-19 should an individual begin exhibiting symptoms related to COVID-19 or come in contact with a confirmed positive case. Testing continues to be available and free to Shawnee County residents. To find a location near you, visit: [www.gogettested.com/kansas](http://www.gogettested.com/kansas).

Questions regarding the Health Officer Recommendations can be sent to [HAAdmin@snco.us](mailto:HAAdmin@snco.us) or by calling **785.251.4949**. Questions regarding COVID-19 vaccine can be sent to [CovidVaccine@snco.us](mailto:CovidVaccine@snco.us).

**Attachment:**

COVID-19 Recommendations from the Local Health Officer (7/02/2021)

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*Shawnee County Health Department is committed to working in partnership with our community to promote and protect the optimal health of all people by bridging gaps to eliminate health inequities, respecting the diversity of our community, through adaptive and innovative processes.*

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## COVID-19 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER

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Local health officer recommendations issued on this 2nd day of July 2021 to mitigate the spread of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Shawnee County, Kansas.

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On the 18th day of March 2020, the Board of County Commissioners of Shawnee County, Kansas found that a disaster had occurred, or the threat thereof was imminent within Shawnee County, Kansas as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) and the confirmed outbreak and person-to-person spread of COVID-19. That disaster declaration was extended to June 30, 2021 as per Resolution 2020-82 but has now expired.

Thus far, COVID-19 has resulted in 17,748 reported positive cases and 368 deaths of Shawnee County residents. COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that continues to mutate into several types of variants which spread easily from person to person and may result in serious illness or death. Of particular concern is the Delta variant, which is much more contagious than previous variants and has the potential to create a local surge in cases. Unvaccinated individuals are at highest risk. The Shawnee County Health Department (SCHD) is currently monitoring and working to contain several Delta-associated outbreaks in the community.

Vaccination provides very high protection against COVID-19 disease, and severe infection after full vaccination remains rare in Shawnee County. At this time, individuals aged 12 and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Currently, 43% of the population in Shawnee County is fully vaccinated and 46% has received at least one vaccine dose. **The SCHD and Local Health Officer strongly advise all eligible individuals receive the COVID-19 vaccine.** Immunocompromised individuals may have a lower vaccine immune response and slightly higher risk of severe disease from the Delta variant than other vaccinated individuals. Many conditions may cause immunocompromise, including advanced age and certain medications. The Local Health Officer encourages individuals to contact their primary care provider with questions regarding personal risk to the Delta variant.

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to endanger the life, health, safety and welfare of persons and property within the border of Shawnee County, Kansas. To reduce the spread of COVID-19, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Kansas Department of Health and Environment (KDHE) and the Shawnee County Local Health Officer, all recommend continuation of community mitigation strategies to contain the spread of the virus.

## **DEFINITIONS**

**Face Mask or Other Face Covering:** A covering of the nose and mouth secured to the head with ties, straps, loops over the ears, or wrapped around the lower face from the nose down. It can be made of synthetic and natural materials including cotton, silk, linen, fleece or paper, and contain multiple layers. It can be factory made or made from household items. The definition includes a clear plastic face shield that covers the forehead, extends below the chin, and wraps around the sides of the face. A Mask or Other Face Covering should not be touched or readjusted until such time as the mask is removed and hand hygiene should be used before taking masks off and prior to re masking.

**Social Distancing:** At least six (6) feet of distance between yourself and others outside your household, except for infrequent or incidental moments of closer proximity.

**Mass Gathering:** Any planned or spontaneous, public or private event or convening that will bring together or is likely to bring together many people at the same time. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/large-events/considerations-for-events-gatherings.html>

**Fully Vaccinated:**  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series or  $\geq 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine.

**Unvaccinated:** Not having received a vaccine dose or  $< 2$  weeks following receipt of the second dose in a 2-dose series or  $< 2$  weeks following receipt of one dose of a single-dose vaccine.

## **FACE MASKS OR OTHER FACE COVERINGS**

### **INDOOR SPACES**

Unvaccinated individuals unable to achieve Social Distancing should wear a Face Mask or Other Face Covering in public spaces *and* when interacting in private spaces with Unvaccinated individuals from other households.

Fully Vaccinated individuals who are immunocompromised and unable to achieve Social Distancing should consider wearing a Face Mask or Other Face Covering in public spaces *and* when interacting in private spaces with Unvaccinated individuals from other households. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated.html>

All individuals should continue to wear a mask in crowded indoor settings such as hospitals and other healthcare settings, long-term care facilities, correction or detention facilities and in homeless shelters.

Businesses or organizations should consider requiring employees to wear a Face Mask or Other Face Covering when unable to achieve Social Distancing and interacting with members of the public.

### **OUTDOOR SPACES**

In most outdoor spaces, individuals do not need to wear a Face Mask or Other Face Covering. However, a Face Mask or Other Face Covering should be worn by Unvaccinated individuals in very crowded settings where consistent Social Distancing is difficult to maintain.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

When using public transportation, taxis or ride-sharing services, a Face Mask or Other Face Covering should be worn at all times.

## **PERSONS EXEMPT**

A Face Mask or Other Face Covering should not be required for the following individuals:

- Fully vaccinated individuals except in crowded indoor settings or on public transportation.
- Children under the age of 10 years old. Children aged 2 and under should not wear a Face Mask or Other Face Covering because of the risk of suffocation. It is recommended that Children aged over 2 and under 10 wear a Face Mask or Other Face Covering with the assistance and close supervision of an adult when Social Distancing cannot be achieved.
- Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a Face Mask or Other Face Covering, including but not limited to persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a Face Mask or Other Face Covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.
- Persons for whom wearing a Face Mask or Other Face Covering would create a risk to the person related to their work, as determined by local, state or federal regulators or workplace safety guidelines.
- Persons obtaining a service that requires temporary removal of the Face Mask or Other Face Covering for security surveillance, screening or a need for specific access to the face.
- Persons who are engaged in an activity that a professional association or regulatory entity has determined should not be conducted while wearing a Face Mask or Other Face Covering.
- Persons communicating with others who are deaf or hard of hearing.
- Persons who are engaged in any lawful activity during which wearing a mask or other face covering is prohibited by law.
- Persons driving alone or solely with other members of the same household.
- Persons swimming in a pool, lake or other body of water.
- Persons engaged in strenuous physical activity.
- Persons eating or drinking.
- Persons speaking or presenting to an audience or congregation if more than 10 feet distance can be achieved.

## **MITIGATION STRATEGIES**

In addition to the wearing of a face mask or facial covering, the following recommendations are provided to limit the spread of COVID-19 in specific settings. Industry-specific guidance and recommendations can be found at: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/workplaces-businesses/index.html>. Following any additional best practice guidance from each business sector is strongly encouraged.

## **MASS GATHERINGS**

- Indoor events should continue to be limited to no more than 75 percent of the room capacity. Social distancing should be maintained.

## **CONGREGATE SETTINGS**

- Adult Care Homes, Long Term Care Facilities, Nursing Homes, Skilled Nursing and Intermediate Care Facilities must follow applicable CMS and KDHE guidance for testing, visitation and vaccination.
  - <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-38-nh-revised.pdf>
  - [https://governor.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/KDHE-Secretary-Order\\_COVID-19-Testing-in-Adult-Care-Homes\\_06182021.pdf](https://governor.kansas.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/KDHE-Secretary-Order_COVID-19-Testing-in-Adult-Care-Homes_06182021.pdf)
  - <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-20-39-nh-revised.pdf>
  - <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-21-19-nh.pdf>
  - <https://www.cms.gov/files/document/qso-21-07-psych-hospital-prtf-icf-iid.pdf>
- Shared or Congregate Housing should follow applicable CDC guidance
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/shared-congregate-house/guidance-shared-congregate-housing.html>
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/homeless-shelters/plan-prepare-respond.html>
- Correctional or Detention Facilities should follow CDC guidance
  - <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/correction-detention/index.html>

## **BARS AND RESTAURANTS**

- All establishments should follow mass gathering limits and social distancing.
- A distance of at least 6 feet should be provided between tables.
- Parties sitting at the same table should not exceed 10 individuals.
- Indoor consumption of food and beverages should take place only when seated at a table or counter.
- Establishments should conduct routine cleaning and sanitation throughout the day and deep cleaning once a day.
- Hand sanitizing stations should be placed in conspicuous areas for the ready accessibility for both staff and customers.
- Live music, disk jockey, karaoke and other performers should be separated by at least 10 feet from any customers or areas in which customers may be present or transit. If karaoke is being performed additional cleaning and sanitizing measures should be taken.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/restaurants-and-bars-decision-tool.html>

## **PERSONAL SERVICES**

Personal services include barbering, cosmetology, esthetics, nail technology, electrology, tanning, tattoo, massage, natural hair braiding and other similar professions.

- All establishments should follow mass gathering limits and social distancing.
- Personal service operations should follow industry-specific guidelines and KDHE guidance. <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1048/COVID-19-Guidance-for-Cosmetology-PDF---8-7-20?bidId=>

## **ENTERTAINMENT VENUES**

Entertainment venues include movie theaters, concert venues, bowling alleys and other similar entities.

- All establishments should follow mass gathering limits and social distancing.
- Establishments should operate only if they can pre-assign seats (when applicable) or adopt other measures to respect requirements for social distance and mass gathering size for customers.
- Bars or restaurants within the venue should follow the above guidelines for bars and restaurants.

## **GYMS AND FITNESS CENTERS**

- All establishments should follow mass gathering limits and social distancing.
- Staff should be on the premises through the duration of operating hours.
- No unattended operations should occur.
- Equipment should be spaced to make sure customers are never closer to each other than 6 feet.
- Equipment should be cleaned thoroughly between uses.
- Sharing of equipment should be minimized.
- Showers and locker rooms should be cleaned frequently.

## **SPORTS AND ATHLETIC ACTIVITIES**

- All sports and athletic activities should follow mass gathering limits and social distancing.
- Organizers should enact necessary measures to ensure that social distancing and mass gathering rules are applied for spectators.
- Bars or restaurants within the venue should follow the above guidelines for bars and restaurants.
- <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/youth-sports.html>

## **CHILDCARE AND SUMMER CAMPS**

- Activities should occur outdoors as much as possible.
- Children should be placed into cohorts and cared for by the same caregiver(s) each day.
- Parents and caregivers should not enter the facility, except briefly to drop-off and pick-up children.
- Licensed childcare should follow state guidance and requirements. <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/144/Guidance-for-Child-Care-Facilities-Licensed-by-KDHE-PDF---1-11-21?bidId=>
- Summer camps should follow KDHE guidance. <https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/DocumentCenter/View/1750/KDHE-Guidance-for-Summer-Camp-Planning-and-Operations-PDF---2-3-21?bidId=>

July 2, 2021

**REMOTE WORKING**

Employers should continue to evaluate whether their employees can feasibly work remotely, and to the extent reasonable, should take steps to enable such employees to work from home.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Erin Locke, MD". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

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Erin Locke, MD, MPH

Health Officer

Shawnee County, Kansas