



Shawnee County Health Department

Shawnee County Health Department
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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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 mitigate the impact of COVID-19 and specifically the Delta variant 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.

Updates to the COVID-19 Recommendations from the Local Health Officer are as follows:

- **Masks for Indoor Spaces:**
 - All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, in crowded indoor situations and unable to achieve Physical 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.
- **Mass Gatherings:**
 - Indoor events should to be limited to no more than 50 percent of the room capacity in order to maintain Physical Distancing.
 - If adequate Physical Distancing of 6 feet cannot be successfully achieved (indoors or outdoors), small groupings (e.g. tables) of no more than 10 individuals should be maintained. This will limit the potential spread to the entire event.

Shawnee County has seen 5 consecutive weeks of increasing cases, percent positivity and hospitalizations. These increases continue to be driven by the emergence of the Delta variant in our community, which is 60% more contagious than previous variants. Viral sequencing has identified the Delta variant as the dominant community strain in Shawnee County. Early infection with the Delta variant has frequently been mistaken for allergies or a “common cold” before more significant symptoms develop later in the illness. COVID-19 vaccines continue to be effective against variants, including Delta, and are effective in significantly reducing the risk of serious illness, hospitalization and death.

As of July 28, 2021 approximately 79,000 (45% of total population) Shawnee County residents have completed their vaccine series. Shawnee County continues to vaccinate at a rate slightly



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higher than the state of Kansas, however, the county is falling further behind the United States as a whole. In Kansas, 42% have completed the vaccine series.

The vast majority of cases and hospitalizations in Shawnee County continue to be in unvaccinated individuals. In fact, Shawnee County has only documented 103 total vaccine breakthrough cases or just over 1 vaccine breakthrough case for every 1,000 fully vaccinated residents. Weekly updates regarding the status of Shawnee County's vaccination efforts can be found on the SCHD Vaccine Webpage [here](#).

The SCHD continues to strongly encourage residents to protect themselves by getting a COVID-19 vaccine. Many opportunities exist in the community and can be found on SCHD's Vaccine [webpage](#) or through the CDC's Vaccine [tool](#). In addition, organizations and groups can request a SCHD-sponsored COVID-19 vaccine clinic by completing this [survey](#). Questions regarding COVID-19 vaccine can be sent to CovidVaccine@sncos.org.

Early identification and treatment for COVID-19 remains essential. The SCHD strongly encourages immediate testing with the development of any COVID-19 symptoms or after contact with a confirmed positive case. Individuals at high risk for severe disease should discuss early outpatient treatment of COVID-19 with their healthcare provider. Testing continues to be available and free to Shawnee County residents. To find a location near you, visit: www.gogettested.com/kansas or contact your healthcare provider.

Questions regarding the Health Officer Recommendations can be sent to HAAdmin@sncos.org or by calling **785.251.4949**. Questions regarding COVID-19 vaccine can be sent to CovidVaccine@sncos.org.

Attachment:

COVID-19 Recommendations from the Local Health Officer (7/28/2021)

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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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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

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COVID-19 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE LOCAL HEALTH OFFICER

Local health officer recommendations issued on this 28th day of July 2021 to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19) in Shawnee County, Kansas.

On the 31st day of January 2020 the United States Secretary of Health and Human Services declared a national public health emergency from Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). In recognition of the continued consequences of the pandemic, this national public health emergency remains in effect.

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. The Delta variant is of particular local concern. This variant is much more contagious than previous variants and spreads twice as easily. Testing and sequencing indicates the Delta variant is widespread in the community. It has led to a rapid surge in cases and hospitalizations, straining local and regional resources. Thus far, COVID-19 has resulted in 18,430 reported positive cases and 377 deaths of Shawnee County residents.

Nearly all new COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations and deaths in Shawnee County are occurring in unvaccinated individuals. The difference in risk is stark. Per the CDC, unvaccinated individuals are at **8x** the risk of illness and **25x** the risk of hospitalization and death compared to those who are fully vaccinated.

Vaccination continues to provide very high protection against COVID-19 disease. Because the Delta variant is widespread in the community, it is expected that fully vaccinated individuals will come into contact with the virus and some will develop illness from it. However, most fully vaccinated individuals will only experience mild symptoms as they remain well protected from hospitalization and death. It is important to note that immunocompromised individuals may have a lower vaccine immune response, resulting in higher individual risk of severe disease from the Delta variant. The Local Health Officer encourages individuals to contact their primary care provider with questions regarding personal risk to the Delta variant.

At this time, individuals aged 12 and older are eligible for COVID-19 vaccination. Currently, 45% of the population in Shawnee County is fully vaccinated and 49% has received at least one vaccine dose. The SCHD and Local Health Officer strongly advise all eligible individuals receive the COVID-19 vaccine.

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.

Physical 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: ≥ 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.

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

All individuals, regardless of vaccination status, in crowded indoor situations and unable to achieve Physical 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.

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 all individuals, regardless of vaccination status, in very crowded settings where consistent Physical 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:

- 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 Physical 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

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- 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 other Face 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 be limited to no more than 50 percent of the room capacity in order to maintain Physical Distancing.
- If adequate Physical Distancing of 6 feet cannot be successfully achieved (indoors or outdoors), small groupings (e.g. tables) of no more than 10 individuals should be maintained. This will limit the potential spread to the entire event.

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://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 physical 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 physical 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 physical distancing.
- Establishments should operate only if they can pre-assign seats (when applicable) or adopt other measures to respect requirements for physical distancing 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 physical 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 physical distancing.
- Organizers should enact necessary measures to ensure that physical 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=>

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.



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