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To our school partners:

Johnson County Public Health is considering how to transition from the Covid-19 pandemic to a community in which Covid-19 is endemic. We understand that it is likely we may not be entirely rid of this infection for some time, if ever. Our hope is to begin the implementation of a phased approach to this transition in early 2022.

We understand that many school districts are also working on this transition as well and are hoping to implement changes when students return to the classroom after winter break. We would like to share our recommendations in regards to how K-12 schools may consider managing this transition.

Masks: Your students and staff are members of the community as a whole and have exposure to others outside of school. We recommend that you monitor local/county transmission rates using the CDC's data tracker: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#datatracker-home>. When local transmission rates are high or substantial, we recommend the use of masks in school per CDC guidelines.

Quarantine: We understand that quarantining children from school does not stop them from exposing others in the community when parents/guardians are not enforcing quarantine recommendations at home. Quarantine has limited effectiveness when the students continue to socialize, which we know is happening. Therefore, we recommend that you stop requiring quarantine of students for close contact in a school setting. We strongly recommend that you require quarantine of those who are not fully vaccinated and found to be close contacts in a **household** setting. We have seen very high rates of transmission within the home and these exposures are particularly high-risk.

Contact Tracing: If you decide to forgo quarantine requirements for in school close contacts then there is no longer a need for you to contact trace within the school setting. Without quarantine requirements, we no longer need you to submit line lists for each positive case.

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Notification of cases: When the county is in a period of substantial or high transmission, we do not believe that you need to continually notify parents, staff, and other students of each case. At this level of community transmission, persons must assume that there is a risk of exposure each time a person leaves their home. The risk is especially high for those who spend the entire day in an indoors enclosed space without the ability to social distance, such as a school. Parents should behave as if their child may have been exposed each day and be diligent about symptom monitoring.

Illness: You should continue to follow CDC guidance regarding isolation following a Covid diagnosis (10 days from symptom onset or test date if asymptomatic and no fever for at least 24 hours and symptoms improving). Parents should not send children to school sick. If a child is medically evaluated or tested and found not to have Covid, they should follow Public Health and medical guidance to be recovered from their illness before returning to school.

Outbreak situations: As with other infectious and communicable illnesses (e.g. influenza, norovirus, whooping cough), outbreaks are required to be reported to Public Health and our guidance for how to manage the situation may vary from case to case. We might, for example, recommend reinstating contact tracing and school quarantine when experiencing an outbreak. We are working to determine the definition of an outbreak and will provide this to you by mid-December. You will still need to report 10% absenteeism through the state portal in addition to reporting outbreaks directly to JCPH.

Monitoring: We will continue to monitor Covid activity within community schools. We request that you continue to notify us of new positive Covid cases reported to you by your students and staff. We will create an online reporting tool that you will be able to easily access. This tool will be ready for use in early January. We will provide instruction for using the tool once it has been finalized.

We encourage you to continue to protect the health of your students and staff through as many layers of protection as you are able. Masking, cleaning, social distancing, educating families, and encouraging vaccination are all things that you should continue to do. In addition, continue to offer excused absences for illness to encourage staff and students to stay home when ill and to allow those who have a known exposure to quarantine if they so desire without penalty.

We appreciate your continued partnership. Please keep us posted of any changes in procedures you decide to make in your school. We will be happy to answer any questions that you have or provide additional guidance as needed.

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