

**JOHNSON COUNTY BOARD OF HEALTH ORDER NO. 001-21 \*\*\*\*\***

*Applicable within the entirety of Johnson County, Kansas*

This Public Health Order is issued by the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County, Kansas, sitting as the County Board of Health, on August 5, 2021 and is effective the 9th day of August 2021, at 12:01 A.M. to ensure elementary level schools in Johnson County can safely provide in-person learning and to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Johnson County elementary level schools, pursuant to the authority provided in K.S.A. 65-119 and other applicable laws or regulations.

The Board, sitting and acting as the County Board of Health, upon a motion duly made, seconded, and carried adopted the following Order, to-wit:

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WHEREAS, COVID-19 is a respiratory disease that spreads easily from person to person and may result in serious illness or death among some who are infected; and

WHEREAS, the United States Department of Health and Human Services declared a public health emergency for COVID-19 beginning January 27, 2020, with now more than 34,722,631 cases of the illness and more than 609,853 deaths as a result of the illness across the United States; and

WHEREAS, on March 19, 2020, the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County issued a state of local disaster emergency declaration, which was renewed and extended on May 28, 2020, and which remains in place at the time of this Order; and

WHEREAS, as of this date, in Kansas there have been 330,932 reported positive cases of COVID-19 spread among all 105 counties, including 5,247 deaths; and

WHEREAS, COVID-19 has resulted in 48,983 reported positive cases of COVID-19 in Johnson County and the deaths of 679 Johnson County residents; and

WHEREAS, the highly transmissible Delta variant of COVID-19 is now the dominant strain in Johnson County, resulting in a rapid increase in new cases and numerous outbreaks associated with summer camps and school-age programs; and

WHEREAS, children under the age of 12 are not currently eligible for vaccines and approximately less than forty percent (40%) of children aged 12-17 years in Johnson County have been fully vaccinated against COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, K-12 students benefit from in-person learning and interactions with others; and

WHEREAS, under state law, children between the ages of 7 and 18 are required to attend school; and

WHEREAS, safely returning to in-person classes and keeping public and private K-12 schools open in Johnson County is of the highest priority for students, parents, schools, and the entire community; and

WHEREAS, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (“CDC”) now recommends universal indoor masking for all teachers, staff, students, and visitors to K-12 schools regardless of vaccination status; and

WHEREAS, wearing face masks while indoors at school will protect the health of Johnson County elementary level students while they are awaiting vaccinations; and

WHEREAS, wearing a mask or other face covering in school gets and keeps children in school and is an effective means to protect students and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 while in school; and

WHEREAS, the intent of this Order is not to deprive any person or entity of any rights protected by the United States Constitution, the Kansas Constitution, or any other law, but merely to set forth restrictions which would best protect Johnson County schools, students, faculty, and staff against the community spread of COVID-19; and

WHEREAS, the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County, as the County Board of Health, and the Local Health Officer are authorized and required, pursuant to K.S.A. 65-119, to immediately exercise and maintain supervision over known or suspected cases of any infectious or contagious disease during its continuance and to see that all such cases are properly handled, and the Local Health Officer is to use all known measures to prevent the spread of any infectious, contagious, or communicable disease;

WHEREAS, the Local Health Officer is appointed by the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County pursuant to K.S.A. 65-201, and the Local Health Officer proposes and recommends that masks or other face coverings be worn by students through and including 6th grade while inside school buildings to slow the spread of COVID-19 in Johnson County schools; and

WHEREAS, Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (JCDHE) works in partnership with Johnson County public and private schools to keep our schools open so that our children can learn and benefit from interactions with others. JCDHE will collaborate with and provide guidance to schools on the wearing of masks while in school; and

WHEREAS, for the aforementioned and other reasons, and in recognition and furtherance of the County’s responsibility to provide for and ensure the health, safety, security, and welfare of the people of Johnson County, requiring that masks or other face coverings be worn by students through and including 6<sup>th</sup> grade while inside school buildings is a highly effective measure that can be taken to slow and reduce the spread of COVID-19 in our schools and community; and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDERED by the Board of County Commissioners of Johnson County, Kansas, sitting and acting as the County Board of Health, that:

### **Section I. Maintaining Healthy School Environments for Elementary Level Students**

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1. To ensure that schools may operate as safely as possible, public and private schools for students up to and including 6<sup>th</sup> grade shall require the following:

a. Masks or other face coverings are required for all children while inside a school building where any students through and including 6<sup>th</sup> grade attend class, unless actively eating or drinking. This requirement includes children in higher grades who attend school in buildings where children in 6<sup>th</sup> or lower grades also attend school unless 6<sup>th</sup> graders are physically separated from higher grades throughout the school day.

b. Masks or other face coverings are required for all faculty, staff, and visitors while inside a school building where any students through and including 6<sup>th</sup> grade attend class, unless actively eating or drinking.

c. Unless otherwise required by the school, children, faculty, staff, and visitors do not need to wear masks when outdoors on school property. This includes students, faculty and staff participating in elementary level recess.

d. All bus riders must wear a mask when riding on a school bus unless documentation has been submitted to the school for a medical mask exemption.

2. The following individuals are exempt from wearing masks or other face coverings while inside school buildings:

a. Persons with a medical condition, mental health condition, or disability that prevents wearing a face covering. This includes persons with a medical condition for whom wearing a face covering could obstruct breathing or who are unconscious, incapacitated, or otherwise unable to remove a face covering without assistance.

i. For students, faculty and staff, documentation of the above condition should be provided to the appropriate school officials pursuant to school guidelines.

b. Persons communicating with a person who is deaf or hard of hearing, where the ability to see the mouth is essential for communication.

c. Persons engaged in religious services, ceremonies or activities.

d. Persons engaged in activities and athletics inside school buildings, who should follow KSHSAA and/or school guidelines.

3. "Mask or other face covering" means a covering of the nose and mouth that is secured to the head with ties, straps, or loops over the ears or is simply wrapped around the lower face. A mask or other face covering can be made of a variety of synthetic and natural fabrics, including cotton, silk, or linen. A mask or other face covering may be factory-made, sewn by hand, or can be improvised from household items such as scarfs, bandanas, t-shirts, sweatshirts, or towels.

**Section II. Lawful Order.** This Order is a lawfully issued order pursuant to K.S.A. 65-202 and K.S.A. 65-119(a) and is also a "public health directive" as identified in KSA 60-5502. This Order shall apply to all public and private K-12 schools within Johnson County. The Board of Education for each unified school district within Johnson County and the respective governing

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body of each K-12 private school within Johnson County shall be responsible for enforcement of this Order.

**Section III. Review by Board of County Commissioners.** The Board of County Commissioners may review, amend, or revoke this Order at any time.

**Section IV. Severability.** If any portion of this Order is found or determined to be invalid, such finding, or determination shall only affect the portion of the Order that is at issue and shall not affect the validity of the remainder of the Order.

**Section V. Effective Date; Conclusion.** This Order is effective at 12:01 A.M. on Monday, the 9th day of August 2021, and shall remain in effect through 11:59 P.M. on May 31, 2022, unless it is amended, revoked, or replaced.

IT IS SO ORDERED THIS 5th day of August, 2021.

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_ Lynda Sader  
Deputy County Clerk

APPROVED AS TO FORM: \_\_\_\_\_ Peggy Trent  
Chief Counsel