

Public Health Recommendations for City Parks/Recreation Services

September 22, 2020

As part of a unified command response, Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health (LDCPH) has developed the following COVID-19 risk-stratification tool to assist the City and department in decision-making for the foreseeable future.

The recommendations contained within this tool are based on currently available science as well as guidance from various entities including [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), [Kansas Department of Health and Environment](#), Kansas Health Partners and the University of Kansas Pandemic Medical Advisory Team.

These recommendations may also change as we learn more about the pandemic and how it affects our community. Utilizing the structure of a unified command response allows LDCPH, Lawrence Parks and our partners to work closely together to continuously monitor community conditions and make adjustments as appropriate.

Because COVID-19 is a respiratory illness, meaning it is typically spread when respiratory droplets from an infected person (coughing, sneezing, and talking) get into the mouths, noses or lungs of those nearby, our recommendations are focused on situations that could put participants and staff at increased risk. We also feel it is important to account for the amount of disease circulating in the community, which is another way to measure potential risks within our city.

At this time, the risk of becoming infected during sports- or recreation-related activities cannot be reduced to zero. We rely on **proven** mitigation strategies to reduce these risks. The City of Lawrence, Parks and Recreation Department must implement proper mask technique, adequate physical distancing, frequent hand hygiene, routine cleaning/disinfection and keeping people home when they're ill.

Each person must also decide whether participation is appropriate for their individual situation. The risks and benefits are not the same for everyone. Consideration should be given to the health conditions of the participant and any household members that may be at increased risk for severe disease.

Although [earlier](#) studies have shown differences in transmission between older and younger age groups, [newer data](#) seems to bring that into question. And while younger children may be less likely to develop severe disease, significant illness, including death, is still possible. For these reasons, we do not recommend differences in recreational activities and sports based on age.

While this guidance will not ensure that we have zero cases of COVID-19 in our community, our response must recognize the interconnectedness of our approaches to contain the spread of the SARS-CoV-2. We have worked collaboratively with local government, health, education and business leaders to develop this guidance based on the best science and medical advice currently available. Our work moving forward is to continue to learn and update this guidance so that we can best support parents, children, City staff and spectators.

Recommendations for City Parks/Recreation Services Based on Risk Level and Community Transmission of COVID-19

	Green	Yellow	Orange	Red
	% Positive Tests and New Cases based on 14 day rolling average, reported Thursdays by LDCPH ¹			
% Positive Tests ²	≤5%	>5% and ≤10%	>10% and ≤15%	>15%
New Cases ³	Stable or declining	Stable or declining	Stable or declining	Increasing
<i>All facilities must have a plan and protocols in place to ensure safety standards are met for patrons.</i> ⁴				
Sports	Tournaments limited in size and geographic scope. ^{5, 6}	No higher risk activities. No tournaments –all sports; all levels.	No higher or moderate risk activities. No tournaments.	
Recreation Centers	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities except “drop-ins” held but limited. ^{5, 6}	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. Activities held but limited. ^{13, 14}		
Aquatic Centers	Indoor Aquatic Centers: Everyone must wear masks at all times (except when in pool). Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held, but mass gathering limits apply. ⁷ Outdoor Aquatic Centers: Will be reviewed for opening in 2021. ⁸	Indoor Aquatic Centers: Everyone must wear masks at all times (except when in pool). Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held, but mass gathering limits apply. ⁷ Outdoor Aquatic Centers: Will be reviewed for opening in 2021. ⁸	No indoor activities. No indoor or outdoor facility rentals. Park shelters may remain open. Masks must be worn at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. Low-risk activities allowed outdoors. ¹⁷	
Nature Centers	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held but limited. ⁹	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held but limited. ⁹		
Facility Rentals Indoor	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. Reservations may be taken/held but renters must adhere to mask and social distancing requirements at all times. ^{6, 10}	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held but limited. ¹⁴		
Facility Rentals Outdoor	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held but limited. ^{6, 11}	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed. All activities held but limited. ¹⁵		
Golf Courses	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed.	Everyone must wear masks at all times. Social distancing guidelines must be followed.	Open but limited access to services. ¹⁶	Suspension of Operations ¹⁷

- ¹ Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health COVID-19 Dashboard: <https://bit.ly/Smart-SafeDGCo>
- ² % Positive Tests is defined as number of positive tests out of all tests performed in Douglas County within the previous 14 days; testing availability must remain stable or improving
- ³ New Cases is defined as the number of newly identified cases within the previous 14 days, based on date of symptom onset, expressed as rate per 100K Douglas County residents
- ⁴ For City of Lawrence current protocols, please see <https://lawrenceks.org/coronavirus/>.
- ⁵ Strict adherence to hygiene and robust operating policies. All activities except “drop-in” soccer/basketball allowed. Activities limited by gathering and social distancing requirements. Masks are required by all at all times. Higher risk activities (see chart below) allowed.
- ⁶ Tournaments may be held but are limited. Both indoor and outdoor may be held. Limitations include: single-day tournaments only, and teams and participants only permitted from contiguous counties of Douglas County. Number of spectators limited to two per participant, if social distancing guidelines can be met. Hours of operation are limited to allow for cleaning/disinfecting facilities.
- ⁷ Strict adherence to hygiene and robust operating policies. Facility will be open for lap swimming, water fitness programs, swim lessons, local swim club rentals, and swim meets for those from contiguous counties of Douglas County. Masks are required by everyone when not in the water. Social distancing will be required. Gatherings must adhere to current recommendations.
- ⁸ Outdoor Aquatic Center will remain closed throughout 2020 and will be evaluated for re-opening in 2021.
- ⁹ Nature Center will be open for walk-in visitation for reduced numbers, as well as reduced hours, and will be not allowed when programming is being held. Strict adherence to hygiene and robust operating policies. Activities limited by gathering and social distancing limitations. Masks required for everyone at all times.
- ¹⁰ Indoor facility rentals will be accepted but renters are required to wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times. Will adhere to mass gathering limits.
- ¹¹ Outdoor facility rentals will be accepted but renters are required to wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times. Will adhere to mass gathering limits. Those renting facilities for activities considered higher risk will be allowed. Masks required for spectators at rented outdoor sports facilities at all times. Capacity should be limited to allow for social distancing.
- ¹² All services available. Masks and adherence to social distancing guidelines at all times.
- ¹³ All activities allowed except high-risk activities (see chart below). No “drop-in” soccer/basketball allowed. Activities limited by social distancing and mass gathering restrictions. Masks are required by all at all times.
- ¹⁴ Indoor facility rentals will be accepted but renters are required to wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times. Will adhere to mass gathering limits. Sports team practices and games for lower and moderate risk sports may be held, if able to remain masked and follow social distancing guidelines; however, no games or practices will be held for high risk sports.
- ¹⁵ Outdoor facility rentals will be accepted but renters are required to wear masks and adhere to social distancing guidelines at all times. Will adhere to mass gathering limits. Renting facilities for sports games will not be allowed. Sports team practices and games for lower and moderate risk sports may be held, if able to remain masked and follow social distancing guidelines; however, no games or practices will be held for high risk sports.
- ¹⁶ Services available; however, facilities are not accessible.
- ¹⁷ All facilities closed to the public. Parks remain open. Shelters remain open. Playgrounds and other high touch areas recommended not to be used.

Mask Use and Gathering Size by Distance, Location

The CDC recommends masking at all times outside of the household except < 2 yrs old, unconscious/unable to remove, or difficult breathing. Athletes should wear one, but if restrictive, recommended exercising outdoors/alone./well-ventilated.

	Indoor <6ft	Indoor ≥6ft	Outdoor <6ft	Outdoor ≥6ft
Mask Recommended	--	--	--	YES
Mask Required	YES	YES	YES	NO*
Limit on Number of Individuals in a Group**	45	None	45	None

Masks with exhalation valves or vents should be avoided.

*For any **unmasked singing or shouting**, including spectators, attempts should be made to maintain at least 10 feet of personal distance

** Avoid any instances in which groups of more than 45 individuals are in one location and are unable to maintain 6 feet of distance with only infrequent or incidental moments of closer proximity. This does not limit the total capacity, but requires that facilities limit

mass gatherings **in areas and instances in which physical distancing cannot be maintained** such as at tables, entrances, lobbies, concession stands, etc.

Classification of Activities by Risk

Higher Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants.

Examples: wrestling, football, rugby, lacrosse, competitive cheer, dance, Basketball, soccer, water polo, ice hockey, field hockey,

High Risk non-sport activities include band (with exception of percussion, strings), choir, cheerleading or any other unmasked singing or shouting)

Moderate Risk: Sports that involve close, sustained contact, but with protective equipment in place that may reduce the likelihood of respiratory particle transmission between participants OR intermittent close contact OR group sports OR sports that use equipment that can't be cleaned between participants.

Examples: volleyball, baseball*, softball*, gymnastics* (if equipment can't be sufficiently cleaned between competitors), tennis*, swimming relays, pole vault*, high jump*, long jump*, crew with two or more rowers in shell, 7 on 7 football, flag football*

*Could potentially be considered "Lower Risk" with appropriate cleaning of equipment and use of masks by participants

Lower Risk: Sports that can be done with social distancing or individually with no sharing of equipment or the ability to clean the equipment between uses by competitors.

Examples: Individual running events, throwing events (javelin, shot put, discus), individual swimming, golf, weightlifting, Alpine skiing, sideline cheer, single sculling, cross country running (with staggered starts) Non-contact sports: tennis, pickleball, gymnastics, golf, disc golf.

Other outside cautions: High-touch areas like playgrounds, benches, picnic tables, etc., may not be cleaned every day. Public should use caution at all times when using these high-touch surfaces and focus on frequent hand hygiene.

Parks and trails will remain open; however, individuals should wear masks and social distance.

Definitions:

Flag Football: Flag football is a version of American football where the basic rules of the game are similar to those of the mainstream game (often called "tackle football" for contrast), but instead of tackling players to the ground, the defensive team must remove a flag or flag belt from the ball carrier ("deflagging") to end a down, and contact is not permitted between players; it will result in a penalty for the team that initiates it.

7-on-7 Football: 7-on-7 football is a popular format among high school football teams as a method to keep players in shape during the summer months. The game emphasizes passing using a **45-yard field and a one-hand touch for a tackle**. All players, except the center, are eligible receivers.

Facility Rental – Indoor – Includes room reservations for meetings receptions and parties. Those rentals related to field/court space for sports must also follow guidelines listed in "Sports" and "Recreation" categories.

Facility Rental – Outdoor – Includes rentals of shelters, parks and other facilities. Those rentals related to field/court space for sports must also follow guidelines listed in the "Sports" categories.

"Drop-In" Activities – Drop-in activities refer to activities at recreation centers that do not require pre-enrollment to participate. This includes basketball, pickleball, volleyball and gymnastics. Most drop-in sports result in pick-up games and less individual activities to improve skills.