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FACT SHEET COMPILED BY JENI STARR

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**APS MENTAL HEALTH SERIES:  
FROM RESISTANCE TO RESILIENCE**

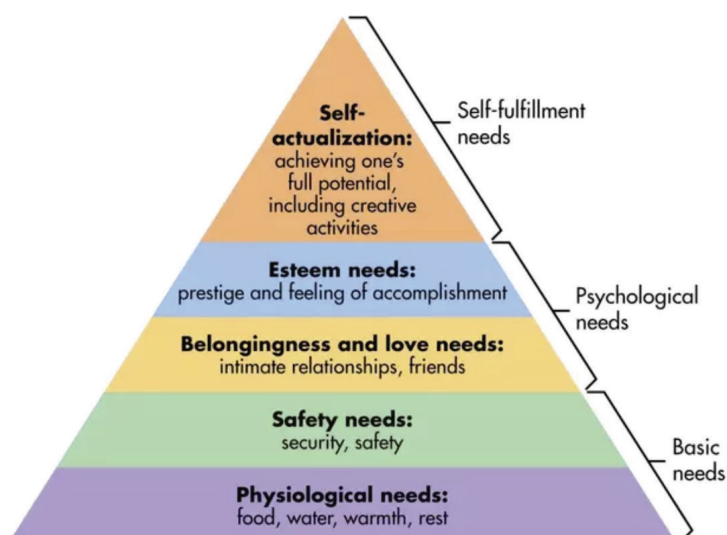
**SCHOOL IN  
THE TIME OF  
COVID-19?**

According to the National Association of School Psychologists, good mental health is critical to the success of children in school and in life. Research shows that students who receive social-emotional and mental health support achieve better academically.<sup>(1)</sup> There are a variety of factors that can affect a child's mental health and the COVID-19 pandemic has brought many additional challenges.

## Mental Health of Schoolchildren

American psychologist Abraham Maslow introduced the concept of a "hierarchy of needs" in 1943. This theory is often depicted as a pyramid with levels for each need. According to this theory, needs of individuals are ranked in a hierarchy with more basic needs being more or less met before higher needs.

These needs are, ranked in order of importance, Physiological, Safety, Love/Belonging, Esteem, and Self-Actualization. Applied to education, self-actualization is the ability to reach one's potential and where learning and creativity take place. In order to reach one's potential, physical and psychological/emotional needs must be more or less met.<sup>(2)</sup>



One in five children and adolescents experiences a mental health problem during their school years. This can include, but is not limited to, stress, anxiety, family problems, bullying, and substance abuse. At the same time, it is estimated that 60% of students do not receive the treatment that they need due to lack of access or stigma. Of those who do receive treatment, close to two thirds do so only in a school setting.<sup>(1)</sup>

In 2016, 16.5% of youth ages 6-17 in the United States experienced a mental health disorder. Of those children, only 50.6% received treatment. High school students with significant depression symptoms are more than twice as likely to drop out of school than their peers.<sup>(3)</sup>

## **The Role of Schools**

Research shows that schools may function as the de facto mental health system for children and adolescents. Eight-three percent of schools report providing case management for students with behavioral or social problems.<sup>(4)</sup>

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, "Aside from a child's home, no other setting has more influence on a child's health and well-being than their school." The in-person school environment provides educational instruction, supports the development of social and emotional skills, creates a safe environment for learning, addresses nutritional needs and facilitates physical activity.<sup>(5)</sup>

## **Challenges of COVID-19 and School Instruction**

The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted school opening. In Kansas, the governor ordered all schools to close for the rest of the academic year on March 17, 2020<sup>(6)</sup>. In Missouri, all public schools were closed voluntarily for in-person instruction on March 19, 2020<sup>(7)</sup> and on April 9, the Missouri governor ordered school buildings closed for the rest of the academic year.<sup>(8)</sup> Many schools rapidly switched to online instruction for the remainder of the year.

The pandemic itself has brought on stress. Many people are experiencing fear and anxiety about COVID-19 and these feelings can be overwhelming. Measures to combat the pandemic such as social distancing can increase feelings of isolation and loneliness<sup>(9)</sup> Additionally, according to the CDC, due to long-standing systemic health and social inequities, many racial and ethnic minority groups are at increased risk of getting sick and dying from COVID-19.<sup>(10)</sup>

The pandemic has highlighted the digital divide across the country between those who have the technology needed for modern life and those who do not. As students were asked to stay home and participate in online school, many did not have access to devices or broadband service that was needed. According to Superintendent Mark Bledell, only 55% of students in the Kansas City Public Schools were able to participate in virtual school when schools closed in March. That means that 45% of students have not had any schooling since the closure.<sup>(11)</sup>

As the new school year approaches, school districts are dealing with challenges around when and how to proceed with instruction. Neither Kansas nor Missouri have state-wide orders related to school reopening and decisions are being made at the district level.

On July 10th, the American Academy of Pediatrics released a statement urging a safe return to school this fall. According to their statement: "Local school leaders, public health experts, educators and parents must be at the center of decisions about how and when to reopen schools, taking into account the spread of COVID-19 in their communities and the capacities of school districts to adapt safety protocols to make in-person learning safe and feasible. For instance, schools in areas with high levels of COVID-19 community spread should not be compelled to reopen against the judgment of local experts. A one-size-fits-all approach is not appropriate for return to school decisions."<sup>(12)</sup>

The Centers for Disease Control released updated guidelines for reopening schools on July 24, 2020.<sup>(13)</sup> In the Kansas City area,

Children’s Mercy released guidance for school re-opening that states, “The decision to resume in-person schooling during the COVID-19 pandemic should be made by the local school and school system in conjunction with the local health department. The decision should consider local re-opening regulations, community transmission rates, and available testing and contact tracing resources.” It goes on to provide more specific instructions.<sup>(14)</sup>

Locally, health departments are making recommendations and school districts are choosing a variety of approaches to continue instruction. On July 28, 2020 the Johnson County Health Department in Kansas released Public Recommendations for Safe School Reopening.<sup>(15)</sup> The Kansas City Health Department recommended refraining from in-person education through at least Labor Day.<sup>(16)</sup>

Recommended Learning Modes Based on COVID-19 Community Transmission

	Green	Yellow	Red	Remote Only
<b>Gating Criteria<sup>1</sup></b>	Previous 14 days show <5% positive tests <b>and</b> steady or decreasing new cases	Previous 14 days show <10% positive tests <b>and</b> steady or decreasing new cases	Previous 14 days show <15% percent positive tests <b>and</b> steady or decreasing new cases	Increasing cases and more than 15% positive
<b>Elementary School</b>	In person following safe-opening principles <sup>2</sup>	In person following safe-opening principles	In person following safe-opening principles	Remote only
<b>Elementary extra and cocurricular activities</b>	In person following safe-opening principles	No all-school activities. Limited to activities that accommodate masking and social distancing. Groups should be stable with limited numbers.	Remote only	Remote only
	Spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked if indoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6' social distancing at ALL school-related events.			
<b>Middle/High School</b>	In person following safe-opening principles	Hybrid <sup>3</sup>	Remote only	Remote only
<b>Middle/High extra and cocurricular activities</b>	In person following safe-opening principles	No high-risk activities <sup>4</sup> No group travel Conditioning/practice may continue with modifications.	Remote only	Remote only
	Spectator/audience should be distanced by household groups; masked if indoors. Facilities should limit capacity to allow for 6' social distancing at ALL school-related events.		--	--

<sup>1</sup> Johnson County COVID-19 Dashboard [https://public.tableau.com/shared/V42WD7K947:toolbar-n&display\\_count=y&origin=viz\\_share\\_link](https://public.tableau.com/shared/V42WD7K947:toolbar-n&display_count=y&origin=viz_share_link)

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A. Safe Opening Principles

<sup>3</sup> Hybrid operations should limit number of people in the building/in all spaces to allow for stable (unchanging) groups and social distancing; reduce crowding of any kind with staggered arrival/dismissal/class rotations. Hours inside the building may be reduced and supplemented with remote learning.

<sup>4</sup> **High-risk activities**, as defined by the National Federation of State High School Associations include "sports that involve close, sustained contact between participants, lack of significant protective barriers, and high probability that respiratory particles will be transmitted between participants." Non-sport, high risk activities include band (limited to woodwind and brass instruments) and choir (or other performing arts that include unmasked singing or shouting). No practices/performance that do not allow for mitigation techniques in **Yellow** phase. No group travel by bus or other collective means that does not allow for mitigation techniques and contributes to mixing among groups (e.g., teams from other parts of the state) in **Yellow** phase.

# COVID-19 Statistics

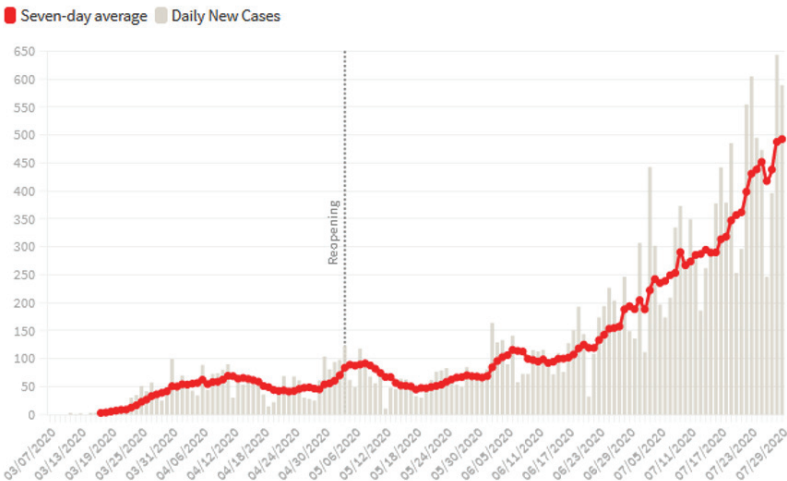
As of July 29, 2020 there have been approximately 4.4 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 in the United States with more than 150,000 deaths<sup>(17)</sup> While the United States accounts for a little over 4% of the global population<sup>(18)</sup> , it accounts for approximately 26% of worldwide confirmed cases and 22% of worldwide deaths from COVID-19.

As of July 29, 2020 Missouri has 46,750 confirmed cases and 1,220 deaths from COVID-19<sup>(19)</sup> and Kansas has 26,870 confirmed cases and 349 deaths from COVID-19<sup>(20)</sup>.

The Kansas City Star reported that Tuesday, July 28th, The Kansas City metropolitan area added 643 new COVID-19 cases, breaking a previous record of 605 cases from the previous week. The area including Kansas City, Jackson, Clay, and Platte counties in Missouri and Johnson and Wyandotte counties in Kansas has a total of 17,820 cases as of July 28th.<sup>(21)</sup>

## Number of new cases in the KC metro area

Hover over the line for the number of cases. Updated July 29.



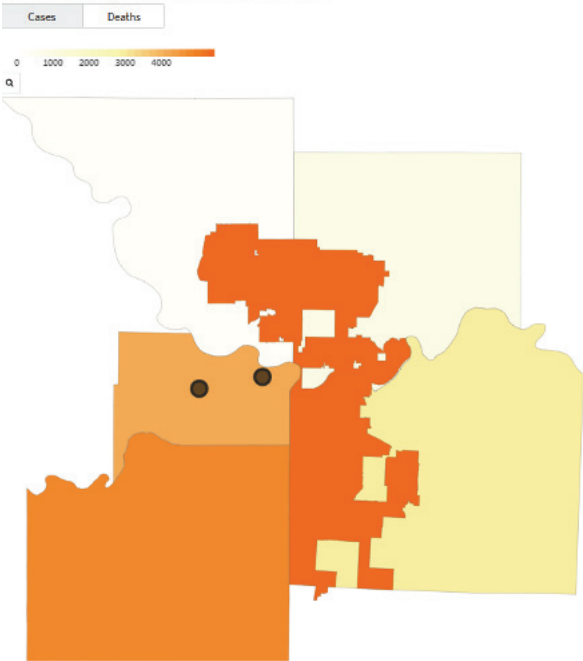
Source: Kansas City Health Department, Wyandotte Public Health Department, Johnson County Department of Health and Environment, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Kansas Department of Health and Environment • Katie Moore and Neil Nakahodo, The Kansas City Star

• A Flourish chart

Image from: <https://www.kansascity.com/news/coronavirus/article244544987.html>

Confirmed coronavirus cases in KC metro area

Click on each county for the number of cases and deaths.



Source: Kansas City Health Department, Wyandotte Public Health Department, Johnson County Department of Health and Environment • Updated on June 22, The Kansas City Star

• A Flourish map

Image from: <https://www.kansascity.com/news/coronavirus/article244544987.html>

BREAKING DOWN THE REST OF THE KC AREA

Hover over the line for number of cases. Updated July 29.

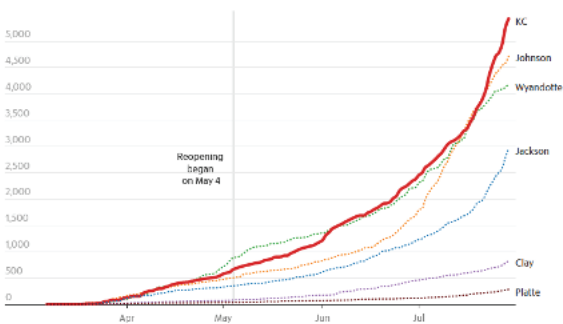


Chart: Katie Moore and Neil Nakahodo | The Kansas City Star •  
Source: Kansas City Health Department, Wyandotte Public Health Department, Johnson County Department of Health and Environment, Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services, Kansas Department of Health and Environment  
• Get the data

Image from: <https://www.kansascity.com/news/coronavirus/article244544987.html>

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