

COVID-19 Mitigation Guidance for Story County- Recommendations from the Story County Board of Health

With the current surge of COVID-19 that the county is experiencing, as well as the anticipation of the return of university students from all over the country, it is important that everyone in the county should continue to practice mitigation to prevent the spread of COVID-19. We recommend the following based on published standards and guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH), as well as common sense. Detailed guidance from these entities are available and should be followed; the information below is meant to share minimum guidelines and emphasize key points important in our community. Anyone reading this will notice the emphasis on wearing face coverings. We cannot emphasize enough the importance of wearing properly fitted face coverings, including cloth face coverings and face shields, worn over the nose and mouth when out in public or around people. Surgical grade masks and N-95 respirators are also effective but should be reserved for healthcare workers and other medical first responders. Individuals who should not wear face coverings include children under the age of two or anyone who has trouble breathing or is unable to remove the face covering without assistance.

1. Daycare. Face coverings in young children are hard to keep on and not recommended by the CDC for children under 2 years old. However, face coverings should be worn by all providers of care as well as staff and others occupying the daycare space such as parents. Hand cleansing stations should be plentiful and frequently used. Children should be kept in as small of groups as possible and the groups should not mix at playtime, outings and lunch. Temperature screening of all entering children, staff, and other individuals with a contactless thermometer is highly recommended. We recommend this guidance for both institutional and small, in-home daycares.

2. Pre-K to 12 schools. When schools resume in the fall we recommend the following minimum measures. All staff should be required to wear face coverings at all times when they are around students or other staff. Face coverings should be considered on students as applicable. Social distancing in classes, minimizing classroom changes, staggered lunches and recesses as well as temperature screenings should be followed. Hand cleansing should be frequently practiced and encouraged.

3. Events/gatherings and religious services. Social distancing (at least 6 feet—or about 2 arms' length) should be practiced. People who have already been in contact with each other and feel comfortable that they are all practicing social isolation (such as families) can be grouped together. Groups less than ten are recommended. Face coverings should be required for all present. Hand cleansing stations should be plentiful and encouraged to be used. We recommend individually, pre-packaged foods rather than communal foods. We recommend that the event organizers make sure mitigation measures such as use of face coverings continue to be practiced after the event if participants continue to congregate in the area. Contactless temperature screening should be implemented when feasible.

4. Sporting events and athletic teams. While we understand that wearing a face covering during the strenuous activity of sports may be very difficult, at a minimum, all coaches, officials, support staff, spectators, and athletes who are not playing should wear a face covering at all times while other people are present. Sporting events should practice social distancing for spectators as well as athletes when they are not playing. Screening of athletes and staff daily with a contactless thermometer is indicated. Group meetings and/or meals should be put on hold at this time and remote meetings should be used. Exercise sessions, such as weightlifting and/or swimming, should be staggered to allow social distancing.

Restrooms should be monitored to limit crowding. Concession stands should be closed. Hand cleansing should be frequently practiced and encouraged.

5. Iowa State University. Detailed guidance from Iowa State University is available and should be followed; to supplement these guidelines and emphasize key points, we recommend the following minimum measures. Face coverings should be required for all students in classes and when in university buildings. University sponsored gatherings should be cancelled unless the recommended practices (see events/gatherings and sporting events above) can be followed. Hand cleansing stations should be plentiful and encouraged.

Students should be encouraged, in the strongest language the university can legally use, to practice mitigation principles when off campus and when using mass transit.

Group living situations, such as dormitories and fraternities/sororities are a special and difficult situation. However, certain practices can be used to mitigate risks. Face coverings should be worn at all times except when in sleeping chambers with roommates. Dining should be staggered to allow social distancing. Hand cleansing should be encouraged. Social events should be cancelled unless the principles outlined in events/gatherings and/or sporting events, as applicable, can be followed. All group living situations need to develop a plan of how to isolate a resident who is found to be COVID-19 infected.

We strongly recommend that Iowa State University prohibit spectators at sporting events this fall. Please only broadcast them. We cannot think of any way these events can be made even remotely safe with the masses of people from throughout Iowa, and other states, who routinely attend these events. Please do it for the health of our community.

6. Shared or congregate housing facilities. These facilities should continue to follow published CDC guidelines.

7. Businesses. Businesses should require their staff to wear face coverings, and practice social distancing when possible. We also strongly encourage businesses to require that customers wear face coverings. Sick employees should be allowed to stay home.

With the current rise in cases in Story County, we strongly recommend these guidelines are followed. We fully understand that what we are proposing is difficult and also that no mitigation plan is foolproof. However, if these principles are followed we can get and keep this virus under control until the availability of a vaccine. As a County Board of Health, our duties include the protection of public health of the residents of Story County; thus, our recommendations are made in light of what is best for the public's health, and we stand by our recommendations.