MISSISSIPPI STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

ACTIVITY DECISION MATRIX

In the midst of unprecedented times, everyone will agree that continuing the education of our children is imperative. Educators are striving to determine the safest ways to provide educational experience, from classroom time to extracurricular activities. School systems and districts should expect cases among students, faculty and staff. For educational activities to start back and continue, the spread of coronavirus within the school community must be minimized. The following is a planning matrix developed by educators in conjunction with healthcare providers to help planners analyze each activity or event in seven critical areas – proximity, duration, group size, congestion, movement, touch and respiratory output.

We know that:

- COVID-19 spreads primarily from person to person between people who are in close contact with one another (primarily within about 6 feet for 15 minutes or longer) through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, talks or sings.
- The longer people remain in close proximity, the higher the likelihood of spread from one to another.
- The virus may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms or before symptoms develop.
- It is possible that a person can get COVID-19 by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching their own mouth, nose, or eyes.

This matrix will assist as educators plan activities and develop strategies to lower the risk of transmission of COVID-19 to all involved in the educational experience. If an activity is found to have a higher risk of disease transmission without feasible or reasonable mitigation measures, the administration will need to weigh the value of providing that activity versus the risk.

Brainstorm and share ideas with your colleagues. Some general strategies have been suggested but planners need to develop specific guidelines and require adherence to these. Considering the consequences of failure to protect all involved, thinking outside the box may make the difference in whether or not an activity or event can be scheduled or continued.

Procedure (See Appendix 1 &2):

Step 1: Identify the event or activity you wish to analyze

- Ex: Classrooms, changing classes, meals, choirs, sports practice and/or games, transportation

Step 2: Complete the risk matrix assignment for each risk factor

- See Matrix

Step 3: Identify if the broader population is at risk vs. individual or a small group

Step 4: Identify mitigation strategies

- Brainstorm as many mitigation strategies as possible in each area. Many ideas can be found on various education websites. General examples:
    - Proximity - Increase distance; wear cloth face coverings; hold activities outdoors
    - Duration - Limit duration
    - Group Size - Break into smaller groups; keep groups cohorted together without intermingling; limit spectators
    - Congestion - Stagger entry and exit; hold activities outdoors
    - Movement - Place directional guides in entrances and hallways
    - Touch - Limit sharing of items; hand hygiene
    - Respiratory Output - Avoid singing or shouting in activities as possible
- Be innovative and specific.

Step 5: Make a determination if the activity is allowable or requires additional modification

- Is the risk high for >2 elements?
- Are the mitigation steps adequate?
- Is there risk to the entire student body?
- Does the educational value of the activity justify the risk?

Additional considerations:

- What is the COVID-19 activity locally?
- What would trigger a discontinuation of the activity?

  Increasing community spread?

  Increased cases in the school?
- Proper documentation in the event an outbreak (to identify those in need of quarantine or testing)

https://www.cdcfoundation.org/covid-19-seminars for a downloadable working document including an example of developing mitigation strategies.

CDC Information on Transmission, Infectivity and Prevention

The virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person.

- Between people who are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).
- Through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs, sneezes, or talks.
- These droplets can land in the mouths or noses of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs.
- COVID-19 may be spread by people who are not showing symptoms.

The virus that causes COVID-19 is spreading very easily and sustainably between people. Information from the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic suggests that this virus is spreading more efficiently than influenza, but not as efficiently as measles, which is highly contagious. In general, **the more closely a person interacts with others and the longer that interaction, the higher the risk of COVID-19 spread.**

The virus may be spread in other ways. It may be possible that a person can get COVID-19 by **touching a surface or object that has the virus on it** and then touching their own mouth, nose, or possibly their eyes. This is not thought to be the main way the virus spreads, but we are still learning more about how this virus spreads.

The best way to prevent illness is to avoid being exposed to this virus. You can take steps to slow the spread.

- Maintain good social distance (about 6 feet). This is very important in preventing the spread of COVID-19.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water. If soap and water are not available, use a hand sanitizer that contains at least 60% alcohol.
- Routinely clean and disinfect frequently touched surfaces.
- Cover your mouth and nose with a cloth face covering when around others.

CDC considerations for schools and childcare
https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/schools-childcare/schools.html

Thank you.

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State Health Officer

Appendix: Activity Decision Matrix

Factor	Lower Risk	Higher Risk	Mitigation Strategies
Proximity	>6 feet	< 6 feet	
Duration	< 15 minutes	> 15 minutes	
Group Size	< 10	>10	
Congestion	Low	High	
Movement	Directed	Undirected	
Touch	Low	High	
Respiratory Output	Normal	Increased	

DEFINITIONS OF SITUATIONAL CHARACTERISTICS

Proximity	**How close together are people in this space?**
> 6 Feet	It is possible, either naturally or with minimal interventions, to maintain a 6-foot distance
< 6 Feet	It is not possible to maintain a 6- foot distance; the activity cannot be done if social distance is maintained
Duration	**How long are people in this space?**
<15 minutes	Less than 15 minutes is typically spent in the space
>15 minutes	More than 15 minutes is typically spent in the space
Group Size	**Who is in the space?**
<Recommended Limit	A small group of people, mostly part of the same social circle
>Recommended Limit	A large group of people from different households and social circles
Congestion	**Are there points of high congestion?**
Low	The design of the space and activity do not result in congregations of people (e.g. entry points, lines, security, etc.)
High	Because of the design of the space or the nature of the activity, people must gather closely together at times
Movement	**How do people move around in the space?**
Directed	Movement is restrained or highly controlled, people are confined to a specific area, not much intermingling
Undirected	Movement is unrestrained or uncontrolled, people can wander in the space, there is intermingling
Touch	**How do people engage with objects or fixtures in the space?**
Low	People do not interact much with each other or with objects in the space
High	People frequently interact with each other or touch objects in the space
Respiratory Output	**How are people breathing in the space?**
Normal	People are breathing normally, low respiratory output
Increased	People are breathing heavily, from exercising, laughing, cheering, singing etc.