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PUBLIC HEALTH
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NEWS RELEASE
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health orders Douglas County K-12 schools closed for 14 days due to COVID-19 outbreak

Order also applies to parks and recreational facilities and public libraries

LAWRENCE – Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health has ordered closures for 14 days of all K-12 schools, recreational facilities and public libraries in an effort to stem the outbreak of COVID-19.

Director Dan Partridge said public health is taking this action based on direction from Douglas County Health Officer Dr. Thomas Marcellino who has authority to prohibit public gatherings in the interest of stemming a disease outbreak. The health officer is also prohibiting public gatherings of more than 250 people in Douglas County.

“The time to institute this social distancing is before we see the instance of community spread, and we are taking these measures to limit large crowds and seek to help stem the outbreak of COVID-19,” Partridge said.

The closure order will take effect immediately to March 29 and applies in Douglas County to:

- K-12 Schools, public and private
- Indoor park and recreational facilities
- The Lawrence Public Library and public libraries in the county
- All public gatherings in excess of 250 people.

As of 4 p.m., March 13, Kansas had six presumptive-positive cases of COVID-19, but none of those were currently in Douglas County. Marcellino said the factor of students, school staff and other community members traveling during Lawrence’s recent spring break weighed on the decision.

“We are looking to restrict the amount of contact in this two-week window to allow for symptoms and the incubation period to pass from people who might be returning from spring break,” he said.

Marcellino said Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health is also strongly recommending:

- Daycare centers to close during those weeks.
- Retirement communities and long-term care centers limit visitors.

- People avoid large gatherings including sports practices, games and tournaments and unnecessary social gatherings.
- When in the community, please maintain the CDC's social distancing standards, including maintain six feet from others.

Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health consulted with public school districts and private schools in Douglas County, Douglas County Government, the City of Lawrence and other partners on this decision.

Federal, state and local public health officials have been responding to the outbreak of the respiratory disease caused by a novel (new) coronavirus that was first detected in China and which has now been detected in more than 100 locations internationally, including in the United States.

If you have symptoms such as fever, cough or shortness of breath and believe you may have had contact or have had contact with someone with a laboratory confirmed case of COVID-19, stay home and call your healthcare provider to wait for further direction.

"This is a developing situation as we are seeing in communities across the world, so we are continually working with our community partners on decisions to protect the public's health," Partridge said.

For detailed information and guidance on COVID-19, visit LDCHHealth.org/Coronavirus.

About Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health

Nationally accredited Lawrence-Douglas County Public Health has served the Lawrence and Douglas County community for more than 130 years. Its mission is to advance policies, practices and programs that promote health for all, prevent disease and protect the environment.

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