

San Joaquin County Issues Public Health Order Regarding Public and Private Schools

Stockton, Calif. – To maintain consistency with the State Public Health Officer framework for reopening K-12 schools in California that was released on July 17, 2020, the San Joaquin County Public Health Officer, Dr. Maggie Park, has issued a public health order to clarify how the State order applies to all schools in San Joaquin County.

The State framework allows elementary schools to seek a waiver to enable in-person instruction if requested by the superintendent (or equivalent for charter or private schools). The fact that the State requires both private and public schools to submit requests indicates that the general rule prohibiting in-person instruction in counties on the monitoring watch list and applies equally to public and private schools.

This public health order indicates that all educational institutions providing K-12 education in San Joaquin County, including school districts, public schools, private schools, and charter schools, must conduct distance learning until the County has been off the Monitoring list for 14 days or the school has requested and been provided a waiver. Local health officers must review local community epidemiological data, consider other public health interventions, and consult with California Department of Public Health when considering a waiver request.

“The goal is still to have all students return for in-person learning, but only when it is safer for the students and their teachers to return to the classroom,” said Dr. Park. “With COVID-19 continuing to spread throughout the community and impacting our healthcare systems, it is critical that everyone follow the public health orders and guidance to stop the spread of this disease to the point where we are able to return to our normal daily routines.”

Schools must also adhere to the guidance published by the State, which can be found at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CID/DCDC/Pages/Guidance.aspx>.

Guidance mandating the wearing of face coverings and prohibiting gatherings continue to apply statewide, except as expressly permitted in other orders or guidance documents. COVID-19 is still spreading and prevalent in San Joaquin County. It is essential to practice regular hand washing and physical distancing of at least 6 feet from other people. Wearing a mask or cloth face covering can slow the spread of COVID-19 by limiting the release of the virus. Visit www.sjcphs.org and www.SJReady.org for the latest updates on COVID-19 response.

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