

COVID-19 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS

This document provides basic guidance to be used by schools, directors, coaches and activity directors to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 for participants in the performance arts. For the purposes of this document, the performing arts will include theatre, dance, music (chorale and band) and speech. With the virus that causes COVID-19 continuing to circulate in North Dakota, activities where people, including musicians, thespians, speech participants and others come together poses a risk for virus transmission. Participation in some of the arts, with the physical exertion, deep breathing with forceful exhalation, physical closeness and increased time spent together, further increases that risk of transmission. The following guidance, even if fully implemented, likely will not stop all transmission but it may reduce transmission, reducing illness and may minimize the impacts of isolation and quarantine, depending on the situation.

GENERAL GUIDANCE TO REDUCE THE RISK OF TRANSMISSION

- Designate one person or a small team to plan and implement COVID-19 prevention measures
 - Include a communications plan in the overall plan
 - Notify administration
 - Assist public health officials to rapidly notify participants, parents, directors and coaches of exposures
 - Notification of audiences of possible exposures, if warranted
- Protect those who are at [greatest risk for complications or death](#) if they become ill with COVID-19
 - Students, teacher and directors with underlying health conditions should avoid close contact with others and avoid large crowds
 - Students, teachers and directors that have a household contact or other frequent contact with a person at high risk should also avoid close contact with other people and large crowds

- Consider options and alternatives for these people to participate
- Monitor and check the health of participants before every practice and game.
- Make a plan for how you will handle sick participants and leaders
 - People with [symptoms](#) should consult with their health care provider to determine the need for testing and not be allowed to participate.
- Increase ventilation to indoor areas used for practice and performance, to the extent possible, by opening doors, windows and increasing the amount of outside air circulating through the HVAC system.
- Physical distancing of at least six feet should be maintained.
- Hand sanitizer should be readily available.
- If possible, wear cloth face coverings or masks while performing and practicing
- Cohort as much as possible. During practice and performances, cohort students into small groups and keep groups separated from each other.
- Use skill building activities that do not require or that minimize close contact
- Practice outdoors, if possible. Outdoor practices and performance may lower the risk for virus transmission than indoor events.
- Avoid crowding before and after practices and performances
 - Staggering schedules
- Hygiene and [cleaning](#) will remain important. Instruments, equipment, band and choir rooms, stages and podiums should be cleaned after every practice.
- If possible, compete only with teams in the general geographic area.
- Bus rides pose a risk because of the potential crowding into a small indoor area.
 - Space seating so people are 6 feet apart.
 - If not possible, cohort into small groups and keep groups separated
 - If possible, practical or feasible, keep windows open
 - Assign seating and ensure that people stay in their assigned seats to more easily identify contacts and to limit contacts
 - Consider using multiple vehicles
 - Wear masks
- If a school needs to close due to COVID-19, practices and competitions should be suspended until school can resume.
- Be sure students and participants are up to date with immunizations to prevent the spread of other illnesses.

MUSIC

Published case studies have shown that singing, especially indoors, can be a higher risk activity for transmitting COVID-19. Less is known about wind instruments and the risk

for transmission. An ongoing, unpublished [study](#) commissioned by the National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) has demonstrated aerosolization does occur through the bells of wind instruments. Measures to reduce risk include:

- Reorganizing classes to reduce class size and to allow for social distancing
 - Six feet should be the minimum distance, greater distance should be considered and used if possible
 - Trombones should be given a space of 6 feet by 9 feet
 - Practice and perform in small cohorts
- Alternate schedules to minimize the number of students in the classroom
- Assist students in creating personal activities and rehearsal plans
- Use music lesson content that focuses on theory, appreciation, songwriting or history
- Use non-wind instruments
- Avoid practicing or performing in a circle
- Students and teacher should wear a disposable mask or washable cloth face covering
 - A slit can be placed in the mask to accommodate the mouthpiece of the instrument
- Bells should be covered with a cloth
- Controlling entrance and exit into the classroom
- Students should not share equipment
- Equipment should be cleaned after every use
- Use virtual or distance learning if possible
- Limit practice, lessons and rehearsals to 30 minutes
 - Allow for at least one complete HVAC air exchange after 30 minutes, with a goal of three complete exchanges
- Instrument spit valves should be emptied onto an absorbent pad (pet pad, etc)

THEATRE AND DANCE

- Reduce class sizes and implement social distancing
 - Six feet should be the minimum distance, greater distances should be considered
 - Practice and perform in small cohorts
 - For strenuous activity (dance) more than six feet is better
- Conduct performances and practices outdoors, if possible
- Props, make-up and costumes should not be shared

- Disinfect items after every use
- Create personal activities for students
- Use virtual or distance learning when possible
- Dressing rooms and locker rooms should only be used for performances or entrance, use and exit should be carefully controlled to avoid crowding

STANDARD PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES

Persons with COVID-19 who have symptoms and were directed to care for themselves at home may discontinue isolation under the following conditions:

- At least 10 days have passed *since symptoms first appeared* **and**
- At least 24 hours have passed *since last fever* without the use of fever-reducing medications **and**
- Symptoms (e.g., cough, shortness of breath) have improved
- If asymptomatic, then the person can discontinue isolation 10 days from the day of diagnosis.

Close contacts are defined as those people who were within six feet of a person confirmed to have COVID-19 for a period of 15 minutes or longer. During routine sporting events and practices, all participants would generally fall into the category of a close contact. Likewise, on a bus ride, those people seated within six feet of the infected person would be considered close contacts. However, if both the infected person and the close contacts were wearing masks, the contacts would be exempt from being quarantined. This includes both routine sporting practices and bus rides. Measures that reduce contact among participants may lessen the number of people exposed and become ill. However, students may not only be exposed during practice or competition, but also through other classroom, social and family contacts.

Close contacts are asked to quarantine at home for 14 days from their last exposure. If a household member has been diagnosed, the household contacts would not finish their quarantine until 14 days after the infected person is considered no longer infectious. Thus, quarantine periods of 24 days or more are possible.

PERFORMANCES, COMPETITIONS AND ATTENDANCE GUIDANCE

Staggering rows for seating and otherwise marking areas where fans can sit can help reduce crowding and maintain physical distancing. Efforts should be made to carefully control entrance and egress to and from facilities to avoid crowding. Social distancing applies to outdoor events as well. Attendees should wear masks, practice physical distancing, use good respiratory etiquette and practice good hygiene. Ventilation in the arena or gymnasium should be adjusted to allow for high rates of air exchanges, bringing in more fresh air from the outside. Foodservice at games should comply with [restaurant](#) and universal standard protocols.

MORE RESOURCES

North Dakota Department of Health <https://www.health.nd.gov/diseases-conditions/coronavirus/protect-yourself-and-others>

North Dakota High School Activities Association <https://ndhsaa.com/>

North Dakota Smart Restart <https://www.ndresponse.gov/covid-19-resources/covid-19-business-and-employer-resources/nd-smart-restart/nd-smart-restart-protocols/fitness-centers>

Missouri School Boards' Association
<https://ams.embr.mobi/Documents/DocumentAttachment.aspx?C=ZfON&DID=GJGDM>

National Federation of High School Associations (NFHS) <https://www.nfhs.org/>

Much of the information contained in the document is taken from the Missouri School Boards' Association document, [Pandemic Recovery Consideration: Re-Entry and Reopening of Schools](#), appendix T. and from the preliminary [results](#) from a study being commissioned by National Federation of State High School Associations.