



COVID-19 Guidance for Schools

February 16, 2021

School-Related Student Travel

The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is providing this guidance to school districts to answer questions surrounding school-related student travel. This guidance is not legal advice. School districts should consult board counsel for legal advice and when making travel determinations for students and staff. School districts also should consider consulting their liability insurance carrier for any questions regarding applicable coverage during school-related student trips.

School-Related Student Travel (Unrelated to athletic Competition)

KDE's "[Guidance on Safety Expectations and Best Practices for Kentucky Schools \(K-12\): Interim Guidance as of December 7, 2020](#)" includes a safety expectation that schools must "[c]ancel field trips, assemblies, and other large group activities to avoid mixing students in large common areas. Adhere to the Governor's current guidance regarding group gatherings."

Safety expectations must be implemented by schools as determined by the Kentucky Department for Public Health (DPH). Pursuant to [Executive Order 2020-1041](#), all public schools must comply with the safety expectations set forth in "Guidance on Safety Expectations and Best Practices for Kentucky Schools (K-12): Interim Guidance as of December 7, 2020."

On Dec. 14, 2020, DPH revised its travel guidance to discourage all out-of-state leisure travel until further notice. Moreover, if people do engage in out-of-state leisure travel, they are urged to voluntarily self-quarantine for 14 days when they return to Kentucky or follow [Centers for Disease Control guidance](#) for alternate options to shorten the quarantine period. More information about Kentucky's current travel advisory is available at the [Kentucky COVID-19 Travel Advisory](#) webpage.

The clause referenced above in "[Guidance on Safety Expectations and Best Practices for Kentucky Schools \(K-12\): Interim Guidance as of December 7, 2020](#)" is aimed at mitigating COVID-19 exposure risks in large group gatherings. As such, school-related trips undertaken by a very limited number of students who can be socially distanced and supervised during the trip, whether in Kentucky or out-of-state, are not prohibited.

It is KDE's position that school-related student trips – in Kentucky and out-of-state – are inadvisable until vaccinations are widespread. However, most local districts have school-related student trip policies that require travel approval by the superintendent or the local board of education. Such policies should be reviewed, in consultation with board counsel when appropriate, and adhered to.



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Because of the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19 and the ongoing impact of the virus and its variants, any travel plans should be made with the understanding that travel cancellations will be a very real possibility for months to come. Districts should investigate any financial penalties associated with cancellations by any involved entity or party and fully express this information to parents and others financially invested. When appropriate, board counsel should review contractual language related to travel that might have future financial impacts on the district in the event of cancellations.

Additionally, when considering school-related student travel, districts should evaluate factors such as, but not limited to, the following:

- Current incidence rates in the local community at the time of travel, communities where stops for fuel or food will occur, and the destination community.
- Possible pretravel testing for COVID-19.
- Ability to ensure masking, social distancing, good hand hygiene and sanitization during all phases of the trip.
- A protocol for screening of symptoms for students and staff.
- Contingency plans if a student, staff member or parent develops COVID-19 during the trip, which may require quarantine and impact return travel.
- Staffing concerns and student supervision consistent with [KRS 161.185](#).
- Any special rooming accommodations that may be necessary to ensure social distancing.
- Ensuring limitations on social gathering of students, staff and parents to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Any special accommodations for students with disabilities and how those will be implemented to also ensure virus mitigation.

Student Travel for Athletic Contests

The Kentucky High School Athletic Association (KHSAA) has guidance related to travel for athletics, which is available on the [KHSAA website](#).