

October 14, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Samuel G. Roberts  
Kansas Justice Institute  
12980 Metcalf Avenue, Suite 130  
Overland Park, Kansas 66213

RE: Olathe School District Inquiry

Dear Mr. Roberts:

Thank you for your October 13, 2020 letter inquiring about a notice that was apparently sent by the Olathe School District to certain students on or about October 9, 2020. Unfortunately, you failed to include a copy of the notice with your letter. We reached out to the Olathe School District and requested a copy of the notice. We received a template entitled “Notification of COVID-19 Exposure at an Event” (“Notification”). This response is based upon the template provided by the Olathe School District. This Notification template was created by the District.

The Notification is not a quarantine order. The word “order” does not appear in the document. The Notification sets forth the recommendation of the Johnson County Department of Health and Environment (“DHE”) for students to quarantine for 14 days if they were exposed to someone who tested positive for COVID-19. This recommendation is made to contain the spread and not expose additional students, teachers, staff, and parents to COVID-19.

When students, teachers or staff are potentially exposed to COVID-19 through school activities, DHE works collaboratively with the school district to communicate quarantine recommendations. Because the recipients of these communications are district students and/or staff who were potentially exposed through school activities, the communications should come from the district. The district plays an essential role in ensuring the safety of students and staff entering school grounds.

Our overarching goal is to keep students in school, which means that we must prevent the uncontrolled spread of COVID-19 in our schools. We do this in partnership with our Johnson County school districts by taking prompt and timely actions that limit the number of students, staff and teachers who are exposed. Quarantine recommendations made by DHE are the appropriate mitigation action to contain the spread and to ensure it does not become wider. School Districts communicate this very important message to their students, families, teachers and staff.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this clarification.

Sanmi Areola, PhD  
Director of Health and Environment

Joseph LeMaster MD MPH  
Local Health Officer