



September 18, 2020

Susana Cordova,
Superintendent of Denver Public Schools

Dear Ms. Cordova,

We are writing to provide an update on COVID-19 in Denver and tell you about our plans to address the rise in cases. Over the past week, the average number of newly diagnosed cases has doubled, from an average of 37 cases to 73. This increase puts Denver over 100 cases per 100,000 population over the past 14 days. This increase in COVID-19 appears to be almost entirely due to increased transmission among students at several universities in Denver County.

Our Departments are responding vigorously to this increase in COVID transmission. Our outreach epidemiology teams are working with Denver universities and colleges to assure that their students are aware of and complying with COVID-19 prevention practices, testing appropriate students and staff, and following public health orders for isolation of persons with newly diagnosed COVID-19 and quarantine of their close contacts. We will also have enforcement teams assure adherence to these vital public health measures. With this increased focus on the part of our Departments and the universities and colleges, we are hopeful that the current increases in transmission will be controlled within the next two weeks.

While the increase in case rates is concerning, we do not think that it mandates a change in the plans of Denver Public Schools to carefully begin in-person instruction, beginning with young children. As above, the increase in transmission is limited to a part of the community that we presume will have little, if any, contact with grade school children. There has been no evidence of widespread increase in COVID-19 transmission in Denver. Furthermore, there has been no change in other key metrics of COVID transmission: the percent of PCR tests that are positive remains well below 5% (currently 2.7%), and there has been no change in hospitalizations.

We remain very supportive of DPS' plan for careful, phased re-opening of in-person instruction. We look forward to continuing to work with your team to assure the safety of Denver's children and the DPS staff.

Regards,

Robert McDonald
Executive Director and Public Health Administrator
Denver Department of Public Health & Environment

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