JOINT INFORMATION RELEASE
Joint Information Center (JIC)

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: **Nov. 9, 2020**
EVENT: **Kenosha County Emergency Management COVID-19 Virus**
LOCATION: **County of Kenosha**

Kenosha County Health Officer Dr. Jen Freiheit is strongly recommending that all schools within the county — K-12, colleges and universities — switch to virtual instruction only between Nov. 23 and Jan. 4.

In announcing this recommendation today, Freiheit noted the continuing upward trend of COVID-19 cases in Kenosha County, with no slowdown projected in the next 12 weeks.

"Our schools have been incredibly cooperative, working with us every step of the way throughout the pandemic," Freiheit said. "The goal of this recommendation is to keep the students, school staff and families as safe as possible as we move into the holiday season."

Freiheit said moving to virtual schooling during the holiday season would allow for a decrease in community gathering and movement over the period of six weeks, which is three COVID-19 incubation periods. "This is necessary to slow the spread in our county, so that we don't overwhelm the health care system," Freiheit said.

Freiheit issued her recommendation after consulting with school districts and higher education institutions across Kenosha County. It is not a binding order, but Freiheit urges schools, colleges and universities to give it serious consideration. This recommendation also includes sports and other extracurricular activities.

"With Thanksgiving, December holidays and New Year's gatherings, public health is preparing for a spike in cases after each event," Freiheit said. "It is the small family gatherings with those outside of your immediate household that are spreading COVID the fastest."

Freiheit noted that when it comes to holiday gatherings, celebrating virtually and/or just with those within your own household is the safest approach.

Those who do wish to attend a Thanksgiving gathering with extended family or friends are urged to self-isolate for 14 days beforehand. Individuals who did not first self-isolate and who spend more than 15 minutes at a gathering where people were not distanced or masked are then advised to isolate for 14 days upon returning home, to help prevent potential community spread of the virus.

More holiday celebration recommendations from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention are available at http://bit.ly/CDCHolidays2020.

"Whether it's adjusting to virtual schooling, changing holiday plans or choosing to self-isolate, we recognize that all of these things present hardships for individuals and families," Freiheit said. "But these are things we know we must do to help slow down what has been an ever-increasing rate of COVID-19 infections in our community"

Together, we can and will slow the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

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