

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 19, 2021

**Department of Diné Education collaborating with Navajo Department of Health to monitor COVID-19 cases in schools**

*Efforts continue amid increase, fluctuations in positive cases*

As the number of positive COVID-19 cases on the Navajo Nation exceeds 32,000 amid a recent surge, the Navajo Department of Diné Education (DODE) continues to collaborate with the Navajo Nation Health Commands Operation Center under the Navajo Department of Health (NDOH) to monitor COVID-19 cases and exposures within Navajo Nation schools. The Public Health Emergency Order 2021-019 stated the Health Command Operations Center will report school exposures to the public.

The Navajo Nation School Reopening Plan requires schools operating on the Navajo Nation to submit a reopening plan with the approved mitigation and prevention strategies outlined in the Navajo Nation COVID-19 Safe Schools Framework along with student safety guidelines to minimize the risk of an outbreak on campus.

Between Aug. 4-19, the following schools have reported exposures of COVID-19 on their premises:

- Kin Da Lichee Olta
- Kirtland Central High School
- Hunter's Point Boarding School
- Kirtland Middle School
- Ganado Unified School District – Alternative Education
- Greasewood Springs Community School
- Lukachukai Community School
- Ch'ooshgai Community School
- Navajo Head Start
- Kirtland Middle School
- Ch'oogshgai Community School
- Greasewood Springs Community School
- Pinon Middle School
- Shonto Preparatory School
- Pinon Elementary School
- Flagstaff Unified School District
- Judy Nelson Elementary School
- Leupp Community School

The list of schools with COVID-19 exposures is updated weekly and can be viewed at <https://www.navajoreopening.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19-Safe-Schools-Framework/School-Exposures>. A full list of contact tracing facilities can also be viewed on the page.

While the Navajo Nation had experienced a streak of days with few new confirmed cases in mid-2021, the arrival of the more contagious Delta variant along with an increase in family gatherings during the summer have led to numerous days of increasing positive case and death counts.

Public Health Emergency Order No. 2021-018, which went into effect on Aug. 16, implemented the following guidelines for Navajo Nation schools:

- **A.** Implement more aggressive social distancing measures.
- **B.** Hybrid learning is encouraged.
- **C.** Limit gathering to 15 or fewer persons for non-classroom instruction events such as back-to-school, orientations, and other community gatherings.
- **D.** Virtual learning is encouraged for those age 12 years and younger.
- **E.** Require students, staff, and visitors to stay home if they are sick.
- **F.** Promptly report exposures using the HCOC portal (available at <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/covid-19>) and notify the nearest local health facility.

According to the Office of the President and Vice President, approximately 70-percent of the eligible population is fully vaccinated, but President Jonathan Nez continued to call on the remaining population to receive their vaccines as cases increase.

Youths over 12 years of age are able to receive a COVID-19 vaccine and doing so is highly encouraged. A full schedule including locations and times to receive a vaccine can be viewed at <https://www.ndoh.navajo-nsn.gov/COVID-19/COVID-19-Vaccine>.

\*\*\*\*\*

For the latest updates from the Department of Diné Education, visit <http://www.navajonationdode.org/> or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.