

Joint Statement of Bastrop County Health Authority and Independent School District Superintendents on Schools Reopening

August 19, 2020

On Monday, August 17, the Bastrop County Local Health Authority (LHA) Dr. Desmar Walkes, M.D. continued her weekly briefings with school superintendents and local government officials. Topics covered in this week's meeting included PCR testing, antigen testing, and DSHS reporting.

Dr. Walkes also discussed her advice for reopening schools as a resource for each of the school administrators to consider in their decision making. Her reopening recommendations are based on the number of cases and other data unique to Bastrop County such as the total number of cases in Bastrop County, the number of absences of students and teachers, and the positivity rate of all those being tested for COVID-19 in Bastrop County. School administrators will use this information to inform local decisions. Each superintendent expressed a sensitivity to students and parents in their district regarding the potential for spread of the virus.

Dr. Walkes reemphasized, "It is critical that everyone make every effort to exercise good hygiene and take personal responsibility as we enter this new school year. With proper precautions, we are hopeful that things will go well for the students, teachers, and administration."

Attending the tele-conference were superintendents of the four Independent School Districts (ISDs) in the county: Dr. Jodi Duron, Elgin; Cheryl Burns, Smithville; Barbara Marchbanks, McDade; and Barry Edwards, Bastrop. Also on the call were Bastrop Mayor Connie Schroeder and Bastrop County Judge Paul Pape, and staff from the Office of Emergency Management.

Each ISD has independent authority regarding when and how to reopen campuses and classes under Texas Education Agency guidance. The recommendations of the LHA were welcomed by the superintendents as they work with their school boards on timing and process. The school administrators, Bastrop County OEM, and health officials will continue to meet weekly to monitor and coordinate this unfolding situation. Parents should contact their local school district for information on reopening decisions.

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