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## **HCPH Statement Regarding the Joint ISD Letter**

Harris County Public Health (HCPH) has made it abundantly clear that current indicators are not safe to resume in-person school activities in Harris County due to COVID-19. HCPH has taken into consideration a variety of factors in making this decision including the importance of in-person activities for students. In-person activities for schools are indeed valuable for the social fabric of children and communities. Data and evidence remain the cornerstone of decision making.

Since issuing the *Harris County School Reopening Roadmap*, HCPH has received a joint letter from several Harris County ISDs. In its guidance, HCPH has recommended that in-person activities be phased-in until community spread of COVID-19 declines. To monitor and inform phased-in approaches for in-person activities, HCPH has recommended a set of benchmarks and metrics to monitor for public health trends. These indicators do not mean that in-person activities for schools will be closed indefinitely until a vaccine is available and the pandemic is over. Rather it is up to all of us to assure that our schools can go back to in-person learning sooner than later.

These recommendations are not taken lightly but are offered with the full Harris County community in mind. Ultimately, school leaders and administrators are responsible for using these metrics and making the decisions to resume in-person activities in a way that keeps schools, students, faculty and staff safe. HCPH remains committed to working with its partners in helping Harris County move forward with its goal of reopening schools safely, responsibly and sustainably.

*HCPH is the local public health agency for the Harris County, Texas jurisdiction. It provides a wide variety of public health activities and services aimed at improving the health and well-being of the Harris County community.*

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