As Franklin County and the State of Kansas continue to experience a steady increase in the number of COVID-19 positive cases, its time to review some of the measures individuals should take to control the spread of the virus. With flu season quickly approaching and the start of school right around the corner, it is increasingly important that our communities are adhering to these actions known to inhibit the transmission of the virus.

- Wear a mask. Wearing a mask works. Masks work even better when they are worn by both parties who may be encountering one another. The quality and style of the mask makes a difference. However, as noted in these studies, some type of covering is better than nothing. [https://www.wsj.com/articles/face-masks-really-do-matter-the-scientific-evidence-is-growing-11595083298](https://www.wsj.com/articles/face-masks-really-do-matter-the-scientific-evidence-is-growing-11595083298)

- Wash your hands. It is now clear that this virus is most commonly transmitted through aerosolization. Good hand hygiene practices remain important. Continue to wash your hands or use hand sanitizer often.

- Keep your distance. Social distancing continues to be important in limiting the transmission of the virus. It is intuitive that prolonged close contact with an infected person increases the risk. Encounters held outdoors or in large open spaces are certainly less likely to result in the transmission of the virus than the same encounter held in an indoor, smaller space.

Phase 3 of Kansas’ Ad Astra Plan limits the mass gathering size to 45 persons. Admittedly, this is somewhat arbitrary, but it is a reasonable number and we must work with it. Events in which there is assigned seating (those who reside together sit together) which maintains social distancing can exceed this number. Local school districts are developing plans which enable several groups of 45 or less, each clearly separated with no ability to interact between groups to comply with Phase 3 guidelines.

Indoor events with attendance exceeding 45 people where interaction among attendees cannot be controlled will not be allowed. In spite of having sufficient space that allows for separate groups of less than 45 persons, unless there are barriers to prevent mingling between the separated groups, interaction will occur throughout the venue, there by creating a single large group which clearly increases risk.

At this time, Franklin County remains in Phase 3 of the Ad Astra: A Plan to Reopen Kansas. I strongly encourage everyone to comply with this. This is a rough time for all - We will get through this.

Willard (Bud) Ransom M.D., Franklin County Health Officer