Allegany COUNTY New York

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

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TO: **All Media Sources**
FROM: **Theresa K. Moore, Supervising Public Health Educator/Public Information Officer**
RE: **WESTERN NEW YORK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT ON WRESTLING**
DATE: **January 28, 2021**

News Release: WESTERN NEW YORK COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS ISSUE JOINT STATEMENT ON WRESTLING

WESTERN NEW YORK – The leaders of the five county health departments (Allegany, Cattaraugus, Chautauqua, Erie and Niagara) in Western New York (WNY) are providing the following joint statement related to wrestling programs. This announcement follows updates to the NY Forward Interim Guidance for Sports and Recreation on January 22, 2021.

Revisions to the guidance relaxed certain restrictions on higher-risk sports, including wrestling. Wrestling involves participants sparring in very close physical proximity for extended periods of time, which significantly increases the risk of COVID-19 transmission. Similarly, masks, which are a method of COVID-19 risk reduction, are not recommended to be worn during wrestling because of a choking hazard.

Further, a Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*[1] (MMWR) published January 26, 2021, summarized a large COVID outbreak associated with a wrestling tournament in December 2020. Through a case investigation that spanned three counties and included diagnostic testing of contacts, the report noted hundreds of contacts, significant losses of in-person learning days, suspension of all winter indoor and outdoor high school athletics in one county, and one death resulting from multiple exposures during this wrestling tournament.

The circumstances outlined in that MMWR brief could easily be replicated at any WNY wrestling tournament. In the interests of limiting risk and protecting the health of athletes, their classmates, households, and coaching and teaching staff within schools, WNY health department leaders strongly recommend that interscholastic, intramural, and amateur wrestling teams and leagues cancel or postpone their winter 2021 seasons to a later date, when community transmission of COVID-19 is significantly lower. Coaching staff and parents should consider promoting individual training and distanced group exercises.

- Tyler Shaw, Allegany County Department of Health
- Kevin Watkins, MD, Cattaraugus County Department of Health
- Christine Schuyler, Chautauqua County Department of Health and Human Services
- Gale Burstein, MD, Erie County Department of Health
- Daniel Stapleton, Niagara County Department of Health

[1]Atherstone C, Siegel M, Schmitt-Matzen E, et al. SARS-CoV-2 Transmission Associated with High School Wrestling Tournaments — Florida, December 2020–January 2021. MMWR MoTrb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 26 January 2021. Available at https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/70/wr/mm7004e4.htm?s_cid=mm7004e4_w#F1_down

- Allegany County Department of Health: www.alleganyco.com/health-department
- Cattaraugus County Department of Health: www.cattco.org/health
- Chautauqua County Department of Health: www.chqgov.com/public-health/public-health
- Erie County Department of Health: www.erie.gov/health
- Niagara County Department of Health: www.niagaracounty.com/health

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