

GOVERNOR'S YOUTH ADVISORY COUNCIL

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*Sexual Assault and Abuse
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September 8, 2021

The Honorable Lourdes A. Leon Guerrero
I Maga'hågan Guåhan
Ricardo J. Bordallo Complex
Hagatña, Guam 96910

Dear Governor Leon Guerrero:

On September 2, 2021, the Youth Advisory Council held a meeting to discuss our thoughts regarding the latest executive order suspending in-person schooling, interscholastic sports, and extracurricular activities.

We recognize that certain restrictions on in-person instruction and activities are essential to minimize the spread of COVID 19 in our community. However, we are deeply concerned that the transition to online schooling would deteriorate the quality of our education. With adequate safety measures in place, schools should return to the traditional model of instruction.

A critical problem with public schools is the failure to adhere to social distancing. While reinforcing basic mitigation protocols, the Guam Department of Education should reinstate this past school year's cohort system to ensure all students follow capacity limits. The shortage of staff members also thwarts effective enforcement of COVID protocols. Limiting the number of students on campus with alternating days allows smoother operation of COVID guidelines such as physical distancing and proper mask-wearing and resolves over occupancy. Private and charter schools with a smaller student population should resume in-person instruction for pre-kindergarten to 12th-grade students by adequately adhering to social gathering limits.

With the introduction of presenting vaccination cards in public areas, middle and high schools across the island should start to incorporate vaccination cards when schools begin to re-open for face-to-face learning. Nevertheless, there should be no significant issue concerning a student's vaccination status, especially for individuals under 12. At the same time, the schools will continue to implement COVID guidelines.

A significant concern for all schools is the possible spread of COVID during mass gatherings before classes and during lunch break. School cafeterias should be temporarily closed until each of the schools proposes further plans. To reduce the risk of "social gathering," all students should stay in designated classrooms/areas. If inside a school, capacity limits should be adhered to. All students are encouraged to bring their breakfast and lunch.

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Team sports play a significant role in promoting youth mental and mental health. The interscholastic sports leagues should be allowed to recommence by requiring all eligible athletes to get weekly testing or submit proof of complete vaccination. However, the leagues' responsibility is to determine if requirements should be implemented on higher risk contact sports, like rugby and football, and non-contact sports, like cross country. Similar to this past school year, the leagues will limit the number of spectators and athletes per CDC or Government of Guam requirements at all sporting events. These requirements should frequently be evaluated monthly to keep updated on CDC and the Government of Guam guidelines.

Participation in extracurricular activities encourages youth involvement in our island community, preparing students for higher-level education. All extracurricular activities and events should proceed in line with the executive order.

With proper enforcement of COVID protocols, our youth should have the opportunity to broaden their perspectives in a traditional learning environment. We are optimistic that in-person schooling can return while ensuring the health and safety of our community. We thank you for all your endeavors to promote the well-being of our island youth.

Sincerely,



Cheyunne Ahn
Chair
Governor's Youth Advisory Council



Frederick Otte
Vice Chair