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Georgia Southern institute signs \$15.7M contract to help protect Georgia's K-12 students from COVID-19

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Georgia Southern University's Institute for Health Logistics & Analytics has garnered a \$15.7 million contract with the Georgia Department of Public Health to manage COVID-19 mitigation efforts in Georgia's K-12 schools to help keep schools operating safely.

"Despite the belief by many that COVID-19 is no longer a concern, the virus that causes COVID-19 continues to have an impact across the globe," said Jessica Schwind, Ph.D., director of the Institute for Health Logistics & Analytics (IHLA). "This impact, coupled with increasing rates of flu and respiratory syncytial virus, can be readily observed in our K-12 schools."

Researchers and public health officials agree a multi-level approach is needed to keep schools open and operating safely in a pandemic, which makes programs like this one so important to community health, Schwind said.

Through this contract, IHLA staff will support the implementation of COVID-19 mitigation strategies in K-12 schools by coordinating resource acquisition and delivery. Schwind's team will review proposals and offer technical assistance to schools so that items to be delivered to schools for COVID-19 mitigation are selected based on an evidence-based demonstration of effectiveness against reducing the spread of SARS-CoV-2, the virus that causes COVID-19.

For example, the staff will be evaluating and procuring high-efficiency particulate air fan/filtration systems and other items that will reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19, such as personal protective equipment, and hand hygiene and cleaning supplies.

"This is a comprehensive project that will go a long way toward keeping our youngest Georgians safe," said Schwind, who also is an associate professor of epidemiology in Georgia Southern's Jiann-Ping Hsu College of Public Health. "This project provides funding for schools to upgrade their ventilation and filtration systems, which will in turn help mitigate other common airborne viruses. It's one of the most powerful tools we have to reduce the overall impact of respiratory diseases."

All public and private K-12 schools in Georgia are eligible to participate in the project upon successful enrollment with Georgia Southern. If you represent a school or school district and are interested in receiving COVID-19 mitigation items, please visit <http://www.georgiasouthern.edu/ihla-k12> for more information.

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