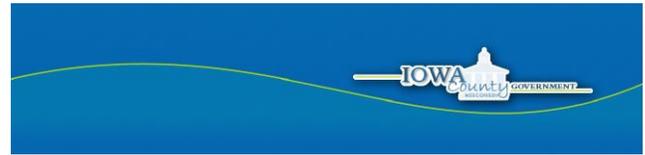


IOWA COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

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www.iowacounty.org

April 7, 2020 4:30pm

For Immediate Release

Iowa County Health Department

Director/Health Officer Debbie Siegenthaler RN, MSN

COVID 19 Update: Are Faith-based Organizations an Essential Service?

Iowa County – Outbreaks in communities across the country have been linked to congregating for gatherings such as church services, choir rehearsals, funerals, and weddings. This has resulted in serious illness and deaths of multiple members of families and communities.

The goal of Wisconsin's Safer at Home order is to save lives. COVID-19 is an infectious disease that knows no boundaries or borders. The more infected people there are, the more strain will be placed on our health care system, leading to devastating results.

Businesses defined in the Governor's Order as essential businesses and operations do not include faith-based organizations or places of worship. The intent of the order is to limit gatherings of people and person-to-person contact in an effort to protect the health and safety of all Wisconsinites by slowing the spread of COVID-19. It is not a statement against the essential nature of faith and fellowship.

Taking time at home to be mindful, meditate, and pray are great ways to practice spiritual beliefs individually or as a family. You can also safely view or listen to almost any form of religious services through television, radio, online video recordings, live streams, or podcasts. Speak to your religious or spiritual leaders to learn about other ways you can practice from your home.

Q&A:

If our religious service is less than 10 people, is it exempt from Safer at Home?

It is strongly discouraged for groups of individuals to congregate no matter the circumstances or location. If a group of 10 or fewer individuals does congregate in a confined space (indoors or outdoors), they must practice physical distancing at all times. It is also important to limit gatherings only to people living within the same household to avoid transmitting the virus through social networks. Sick individuals should not leave their home unless obtaining necessary medical care.

Can our congregation gather in the church's parking lot if we stay in our cars?

Wisconsin's Safer at Home order does not allow for gatherings of more than 10 people in a confined space at a time, which includes areas such as parking lots and festival grounds. While an individual is safe in their car with the windows rolled up, it is extremely difficult to manage these types of gatherings. Areas such as parking lots also have limited access to restrooms, and participants may be tempted to get out of their cars to stretch and enjoy the weather, creating potential for the virus to spread through interaction.

Case Update

4 Positive Test Results in Iowa County
133 Negative Test Results in Iowa County
2,578 Positive Test Results in Wisconsin
28,512 Negative Test Results in Wisconsin
745 (29%) Hospitalizations
92 Deaths in Wisconsin

For a broader picture of the number of cases and a new feature which details the data further, see <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>

Announcements

- **[Upland Hills Health Hospital and Clinics:](#)**
 - Updated 4/3 - No Visitor or Gift Policy at Hospital and Nursing & Rehabilitation Center
 - Effective 3/30 - UHH Clinics in Dodgeville, Mineral Point and Mt. Horeb are open 9 AM-3 PM Monday-Friday.

Important Sources of Information

- **211 Wisconsin** is an easy and helpful resource for COVID 19 questions. Simply call 211 from your phone <https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/>

- **For localized information:**

Please monitor the following Social Media sites:

Iowa County Public Health on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/iowacountyhealthdepartment/>

Upland Hills Health on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/UplandHillsHealthHospital/>

Iowa County Emergency Management on Twitter - <https://twitter.com/ICEMWI>

Iowa County Emergency Management on Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/icemwi/>

Monitor the following websites:

Iowa County COVID 19 <https://www.iowacounty.org/>

Upland Hills Health <https://www.uplandhillshealth.org/patient-visitors/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information/>

WI Department of Health Services (DHS) <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

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