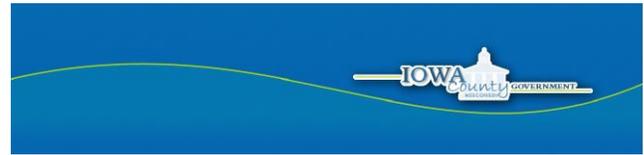


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For Immediate Release

Iowa County Health Department

Director/Health Officer Debbie Siegenthaler RN, MSN

Iowa County COVID 19 Response

Iowa County – We are all in the midst of unprecedented times with the COVID 19 pandemic. It has brought impactful change to our daily lives. Preparation for a pandemic, just as with other disasters, has been occurring for many years. Planning and response efforts began intensely in early March and are ongoing today and for the foreseeable future.

Many dedicated partners are involved in the response including: Iowa County Health Department, Iowa County Emergency Management, Upland Hills Hospital and Clinics, Local School Districts, Iowa County Sheriff's Department, Iowa County Public Safety Agencies, including law enforcement and first responders, the County Coroner's Office, area Funeral Directors, Long Term Care facilities, Iowa County Government and Facility Services, Unified Counseling, Social Services, ADRC, SUN Program and many others. The Iowa County Emergency Operations Center was officially operational on March 12th, 2020 and has been functional 24/7 each day since. Operations in the local EOC involves daily briefings, virtual meetings and planning with several partners such as the State EOC, Upland Hills, public health partner briefings, statewide meetings with statewide agencies such as DHS, regional planning meetings, weekly stakeholder meetings with broad community partners, etc.

Each day of the response has consisted of planning around the broad topic areas of Health Care System Planning and Response, Personal Protective Equipment, Testing, Elections, Public Information and Messaging, Case Investigation and Contact Tracing, Community Mitigation, Daily Operations including Building Capacity to Respond, Long Term Care, Mental Health, Vulnerable Populations, and Business/Organizations.

Our mission remains the goal of limiting and slowing the spread of this disease in order to flatten the curve and maintain sufficient capacity in our hospitals to care for those that need it. The response requires partnership between so many in health care, government and the private sector but the most important partner is the public. We recognize the sacrifice being made and know it is difficult. We ask that you continue to rise to the challenge and protect your family friends and neighbors who are vulnerable. We advise you to stay informed with reliable sources of information, take everyday actions to protect yourself and those you love, and share accurate information with neighbors, friends and co-workers, especially people who may have difficulty receiving or understanding the information. We encourage residents to continue to patronize local businesses and utilize services offered.

Our recommendations are as follows:

- Stay up-to-date on current case counts and recommendations
- The best way to prevent COVID-19 is to prevent exposure to people outside your household.
- Cover your coughs and sneezes using a tissue. Be sure to wash your hands with soap and water immediately afterwards. Consider wearing a cloth face covering while in public.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
- Regularly clean frequently touched objects and surfaces. Make sure to clean high-touch surfaces like counters,

tabletops, doorknobs, bathroom fixtures, toilets, phones, keyboards, tablets, and bedside tables.

- Stay home if able, avoid group gatherings, and practice social distancing.
 - Stay home when you are sick
 - If you are having symptoms or you have questions, please contact your regular medical provider.
- Providers/Clinics are versed in the procedure for getting people tested if that is determined to be a need.

We also encourage businesses, organizations, cities, villages and all stakeholders make a plan – how will you ensure social distancing and protect those who are part of your team? What modifications in work space or work flow will you need to make. What will it take to get you there?

Finally, we wish to share some thoughts...

Keith Hurlbert, Iowa County Emergency Management Director

As we begin to plan for what normal will be in our communities, adhering to the safe guards and protection recommendations will be key to keeping each other healthy. I recently posted the following statement to social media.

Follow the rules, don't follow the rules. We are living in an age of empowerment. We hold the health & wellbeing of others in our hands. Treat it as if it's the most important thing you have ever done... because it is!

When the recommendation to wear a face covering exists, wear one. Sanitize your hands often, sanitize surfaces, maintain social distancing and if you are sick, please stay home. Every person in every community has a role to play in keeping all people healthy and safe. Please take it seriously.

Lisa Schnedler, President and CEO, Upland Hills Health

The response to this pandemic has really been an “all-in” approach. The tremendous response of our county residents in “staying home” has given us the much needed time to prepare for COVID-19 positive patients. Now, as we prepare to begin to open needed services, this extended time period is allowing us to further develop ways we can offer these services in a safe and caring manner. The teamwork of all of those on the county-wide Emergency Preparedness team has been phenomenal. The hospital staff has been selfless and prepared for whatever the future holds. Our residents are top notch. From making masks to keeping shelves stocked, I feel I cannot say “Thank you!” enough. I am grateful to be part of this county-wide effort.

Iowa County Sheriff Steven Michek

The Iowa County Sheriff's Office appreciates our citizens that are doing their best to adhere to the Safer at Home orders. “This is an extremely difficult time for many of our citizens. Today we have modifications of the original Safer at Home which makes some changes to allow some additional opportunities. I urge everyone to be good stewards of these opportunities so we can continue to get closer to a more normal lifestyle. In Iowa County we have been doing very well with compliance and I would expect that to continue, please help us to keep a good thing going”.

Debbie Siegenthaler, Director/Health Officer Iowa County Health Department

At the forefront of this response must be the protection of those most vulnerable in our community. We have a responsibility to do all we can to protect them. As we've learned over the weeks, these are unprecedented times and with it has come response efforts we have never face. We also know that the public's actions have made a difference. We are not seeing a surge in people flooding our hospitals or needing to call 911. It is not a surprise that we are willing to help each other and work together to do what's best for our families, our neighbors, and our communities. As we implement the Badger Bounce Back plan to be able to reopen the economy in phases, we must accelerate slowly. Coming out of the gate at 60 mph won't work, we will need to ease out at a slower

pace, more like 5 or 10 mph. We want to be sure workers and businesses are prepared to reopen as soon as it is safe to do so.

The Badger Bounce Back plan is available [here](#). The Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation's portion of the Badger Bounce Back plan aimed at helping to ensure workers and businesses are prepared and ready to bounce back is available [here](#). The Badger Bounce Back plan in brief is also available [here](#).

Additional Resource: [DHS COVID-19 Prepare Page](#)

Case Update

7 Positive Test Results in Iowa County
221 Negative Test Results in Iowa County
5,356 Positive Test Results in Wisconsin
54,573 Negative Test Results in Wisconsin
1,353 (25%) Hospitalizations
262 Deaths in Wisconsin

For a broader picture of the number of cases and additional detail see

<https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>

Announcements

- **[Upland Hills Health Hospital and Clinics:](#)**
 - UHH Clinics in Dodgeville, Mineral Point, Mt. Horeb and Montfort are open 9 AM-3 PM Monday-Friday.
 - 4/23/2020: Food donation policy update: All food donations from the community (or a UHH staff member donating to another department) must follow the Restaurant & Food Safety Requirements. All food donations from the community (or from a UHH staff member donating to another department) must be coordinated through the Foundation.
 - a. The Foundation will coordinate food donations in consultation with Culinary Services.
 - b. Food donors may suggest a department to receive the food donation. However, Culinary Services reserves the right to spread donations among various departments to ensure a fair distribution of donated food items for all staff who work in patient care or support patient care services.
- **COVID-19 Could Affect Severe Weather Sheltering Plans.** With severe weather season underway in Wisconsin, it's essential that people reevaluate their planning and anticipate the effects COVID-19 could have on where they take shelter. While it is important to practice good social distancing, [ReadyWisconsin](#) encourages everyone to make sure that doesn't prevent them from seeking safety during a severe thunderstorm or tornado warning. "While COVID-19 remains a serious threat to public health, severe weather also poses a major risk to the safety of everyone in its path," said Dr. Darrell L. Williams, Wisconsin Emergency Management administrator. "While we do want people to practice safe social distancing when possible, that should never stop them from going to a shelter during a dangerous weather event." For more information visit <https://dma.wi.gov/DMA/wemnews/2020wemnews/20056>

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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