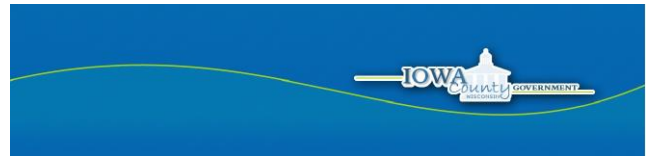


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For Immediate Release

Iowa County Health Department

Director/Health Officer

Debbie Siegenthaler RN, MSN

Weekend Increase of 73 Cases, Case Count at 758; Health Department Recommendations; Plea to the Community

Iowa County – The Health Department confirms over the weekend we added 73 additional cases bringing the current COVID-19 confirmed case count in Iowa County to 758. Cases are in all age ranges and across the entire county. These recent cases are in persons in the following age ranges: 0-17 (13), 18-25 (10), 26-35 (15), 36-45 (12), 46-55 (12), 56-65 (5), 66-75 (2) and 76-85 (4). The number of individuals that have recovered is 400, meaning 358 active cases. Iowa County status remains classified as VERY HIGH activity.

“We are experiencing the highest volume of cases in Iowa County yet and it is not slowing down”, reports Debbie Siegenthaler, Director, Iowa County Health Department. With 73 new cases this weekend, the ability we have to keep up with contact tracing is greatly diminished”, added Siegenthaler. The Health Department has implemented crisis standards for contact tracing protocol which means that their priority is to contact positive cases only. As a result, they are unable to reach out to close contacts. “If you are awaiting a test result, please be sure to remain quarantined. If you test positive, please isolate yourself and let your close contacts know to self-quarantine for 14 days and consider being tested”, added Siegenthaler. For more information, please visit <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/publications/p02599.pdf>

“The rate of increasing cases is a concern on several additional fronts”, continued Siegenthaler. “We continue to be very concerned about hospital capacity, locally and regionally. At Uplands Hills Health in Dodgeville, the metric for staffing status indicates the number of available staff to care for the volume of patients is red. Even more troubling, are the regional hospital capacity metrics and the information that some of the hospitals that serve our residents are reporting difficulty getting supplies they need, staff shortages and limited bed availability.” Our regional health care infrastructure metric represents regional hospital bed use and is currently yellow, as 84% of regional hospital beds are in use. In addition, 85% of total regional ICU beds are in use. See more at DHS <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/disease.htm>

“The fast spread of the virus is making it difficult for schools, healthcare facilities and businesses to run effectively. We have 42% of recent cases who have no idea where they contracted the virus. Anytime you leave your home, you should anticipate that you will come in contact with coronavirus. If you are in a high risk category, staying home as much as you can is extraordinarily important”, Siegenthaler noted.

Mass Gathering Recommendation: Updated

With eight of our 13 COVID-19 Dashboard metrics being red or yellow, it is clear that our county must act to slow

the spread of COVID-19. We cannot be more emphatic how important it is that all Iowa County residents, organizations and facilities be diligent now. Every person and every practice is critical to our goal of not overwhelming both our local hospitals and those we count on to care for us if we are very, very sick. What we do today will impact our health care systems ability to keep up with the increasing demand.

Therefore, we are recommending that Iowa County move to back to Phase 1. “We had been in Phase 2 since September 30, yet it seems many are not changing their behavior to slow the spread. Many of our cases report attending group gatherings in the days before symptoms began. With the Holidays coming, we plead with our community to do your part in slowing the spread”, said Siegenthaler.

We are asking the Iowa County community to:

- Limit indoor gatherings to 10 people or less.
- Limit outdoor gatherings to 25 people or less.
- Post-poner or cancel all non-essential events, gatherings and travel

In addition, we reiterate diligence in the following:

- Wear a cloth face covering in public settings, especially when it is difficult to practice physical distancing.
- Stay at least 6 feet away from other people when you leave your home.
- Wash your hands regularly for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol.

School Recommendation

The Iowa County School Capacity Indicator Dashboard <https://www.iowacounty.org/COVID-19IowaCountySchoolGuidance> has 6 of its 10 metrics either red or yellow, and 5 of these 6 metrics are red. The new case rate is 99.3 per 10,000, up significantly from the previous value of 66.5. Cases among school age children has also increased.

With cases increasing so drastically, we recommend that schools consider moving to virtual instruction for middle and high school students, and consider doing so for the entire district as operationally necessary. In addition, we recommend that schools postpone all contact sports. We recommend these measures be in place until December 4, 2020. Several school boards and districts have made a pivot to virtual and we completely support these decisions.

Community Testing

The next scheduled community testing will be **Thursday, November 12 from 11:00 am – 1:00pm in Lafayette County at the Ames Road Multipurpose Building at 11974 Ames Road in Darlington.** Next week’s test site will be in Iowa County on Thursday, November 19 from 11:00 – 1:00 at the Health and Human Services Center located at 303 West Chapel Street in Dodgeville.

Testing is free and open to anyone (age 5+) who feels they have a need to be tested. Minors must be accompanied by a parent or guardian with consent. Appointments are not required, but it is requested that those who wish to be tested pre-register at <https://register.covidconnect.wi.gov>.

People should consider visiting the testing site if:

- * They have had close contact with someone who tested positive for COVID-19.
- * They have COVID-19 symptoms

- * They have regular exposure to a large number of people (i.e., people who work in grocery stores)
- * They work closely with high-risk populations (i.e., healthcare workers, people who work with people who are incarcerated, people who work in long-term care facilities)

Upland Hills Hospital will continue to provide COVID-19 testing as they have since the pandemic began. Please see the Upland Hills website for information on getting tested at their facility.

Important Sources of Information

- **Wisconsin Statewide and Regional metrics** [DHS website](#)
 - WI Department of Health Services <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/outbreaks/index.htm>
 - Regional metrics <https://publichealthmdc.com/coronavirus/data#metrics>
 - Activity risk level <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/local.htm>
 - County-specific data <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/cases-map.htm>
 - Decision Tool for Individuals and Families <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/decision.htm>
 - Holiday Safety <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19/community.htm#-holidays>
- **Resources on the Iowa County website.** <https://www.iowacounty.org/departments/COVID-19>
 - COVID 19 Dashboard (updated each Friday)
 - School Capacity Indicators (updated each Friday)
 - Daily Iowa County Case Count (updated Monday-Friday)
- **Upland Hills Health** <https://www.uplandhillshealth.org/patient-visitors/covid-19/>
- **Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>
- **211 Wisconsin** Simply call 211 from your phone <https://211wisconsin.communityos.org/>

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/>

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