



Douglas County Public Health

Douglas County Department of Health & Human Services
1316 N. 14th St, Ste. 324 | Phone: 715-395-1304
www.douglascountywi.org

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 12, 2020

CONTACT: Kathy Ronchi, Douglas County Public Health Officer kathy.ronchi@douglascountywi.org

COVID-19: Public Health Advisory

On Wednesday, May 13th, the Wisconsin Supreme Court overturned the state's Safer at Home order. Though Safer at Home orders are no longer in place, COVID-19 remains present in Douglas County and outbreaks continue to occur in nearby communities. This is an update to the original advisory released on May 15th, 2020 addressing the continued low numbers of people who have tested positive for the virus and recommendations for safely increasing mass gathering numbers while maintaining COVID-19 prevention strategies. "The good work most people are doing to reduce the spread of COVID-19 is reflected in our ongoing low number of positive cases." said Kathy Ronchi, Health Officer. "Working together we will continue to protect people where we live, work and play."

Here is what we know:

As of June 11th, the number of positive test results in Wisconsin has doubled to nearly 22,000 since the end of Safer at Home. One thousand more people have required hospitalization (2,976), and 250 more have died (682). The numbers in neighboring Minnesota are even higher. COVID-19 is a virus that spreads through respiratory droplets from those infected who may or may not have symptoms. We must use the tools we have available to minimize the spread of the virus and the illness, hospitalizations and death it can cause.

Since the end of Safer at Home, Douglas County has doubled the number of people who have tested negative for COVID-19 (1,693) and has eight more people who have tested positive (20). The most recent case is an elderly person in a long term care facility who participated in a broad testing initiative and is asymptomatic. Public Health is working closely with the facility to monitor for further cases. Having successful COVID-19 prevention strategies in place contributed to the containment of the disease to just one individual within this high risk environment.

Although COVID-19 remains a threat to our community, we have seen a decrease in cases over the past few weeks. Area healthcare providers have increased access to testing by putting plans in place for symptomatic patients, and businesses have committed to reducing the risk of spreading COVID-19 by following prevention strategies. With these measures in place restrictions can continue to be lifted in Douglas County.

Mass Gatherings: Douglas County Public Health advises against mass gatherings over 50 people indoors and over 100 people outdoors. Mass gatherings are those planned or spontaneous events with a large number of people in attendance that could strain the planning and response resources of the community hosting the event, such as a concert, festival, conference, or sporting event. Early evidence suggests that risk in outdoor environments seems to be lower than indoor environments. Events where physical distancing cannot be maintained, such as sports requiring close contact, should be postponed at this time. Businesses that could become sites for mass gatherings should consider how they will support physical distancing by designing their environment, educating staff and reminding customers of prevention strategies. If you are planning or considering attending an event, regardless of attendance numbers, please review our Community Activities during COVID-19 webpage at <https://www.douglascountywi.org/1144/Summer-Activities>

What you can do:

1. Stay at home if you are sick, contact your provider for a COVID-19 test
2. Minimize close physical contact with those outside of your household
3. Minimize travel, especially to areas considered “viral hotspots” within and beyond our state borders
4. Wear a fabric face covering if you are unable to maintain social distancing practices
5. Maintain 6-foot distances with others whenever possible
6. Minimize congregating in large groups
7. Wash your hands frequently with soap and water
8. Avoid touching your face
9. Comply with local public health COVID-19 isolation and quarantine orders
10. If you choose to visit public places, be prepared to avoid crowds and sanitize hands when leaving.

What businesses should do:

Businesses must take action to protect their workforce and customers. Follow the guidance documents available through the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC).

1. Learn about and implement COVID-19 prevention strategies as outlined by WEDC:
<https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines/>
2. Train staff in COVID-19 prevention strategies to protect themselves as well as your customers by following CDC guidelines.
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/reopen-guidance.html>
3. Hold your customers responsible for maintaining social distancing strategies while visiting your establishment
4. Environmental health staff are prepared to assist licensed businesses in developing COVID-19 plans. Please contact our office for guidance at 715-395-1304

What Public Health will do:

1. Monitor the Wisconsin Electronic Communicable Disease Surveillance System (WEDSS) for COVID-19 test results daily
2. Contact tracing, isolation and quarantine orders
3. Monitor for and respond to local COVID-19 outbreak
4. Provide guidance for businesses as well as general public
5. Communicate local COVID-19 status regularly
6. Issue mandatory orders if compliance with guidelines are not followed and the community is placed at risk

We are in this together. We can choose to protect ourselves and each other, and thereby protect our community and economy, by changing our behavior in accordance with the actions listed above.

Check the Douglas County web page for updates and alerts.

- Douglas County COVID-19 Dashboard: <https://www.douglascountywi.org/1124/COVID-19-Updates>
 - Wisconsin Department of Health Services COVID-19 : <https://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/covid-19>
 - Guidance for Businesses: <https://wedc.org/reopen-guidelines/>
-