



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

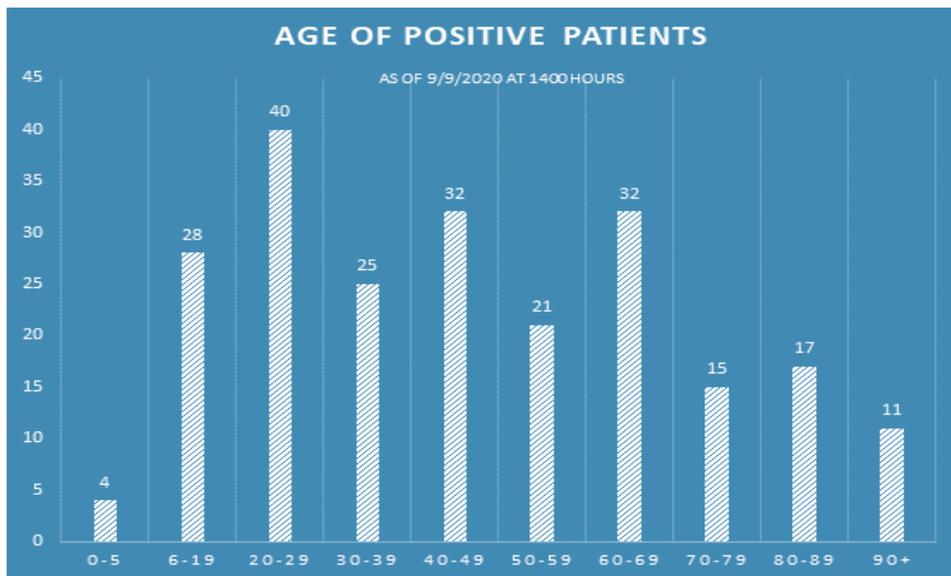
COVID-19 CASES STILL CLIMBING IN ITASCA COUNTY

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **September 14, 2020**) – Itasca County Public Health has identified a cumulative total of 249 laboratory-confirmed cases of COVID-19 among its residents, as of noon Monday, Sept. 14. This reflects a rise of 27 cases in the past six days, 13 over the weekend. The state website may not yet reflect all cases.

No additional Itasca County deaths have been attributed to the virus.

“We are at a precarious point,” said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. “The spread of Coronavirus in Itasca County is from a combination of sources – social gatherings, congregate settings, restaurants, and from individual and unidentified sources (community spread). All ages have been impacted.

“We need to fight this disease on every front, and every person has a role to play. As weather forces us indoors and as our children are back in school, it is essential that we pay attention to COVID-like symptoms. If you or your children are sick, or if you have been exposed to someone with diagnosed COVID, please stay away from others until you know if you have the virus.”





Itasca County Public Health provides real-time data for local school districts as they continually balance factors in their safe learning plans and approaches, said Chandler. In addition to case rates, it matters how COVID-19 is spreading in the community.

According to state guidance, if there are COVID-19 clusters that are isolated to a single and known location and one which does not have a strong connection to school districts, it does not require a shift to a hybrid learning model. The Minnesota Safe Learning plan, which provides guidance to schools and youth programs, can be found at the Minnesota Department of Education website.

Currently, local schools range from all-online to fully in-person learning, with some schools offering a hybrid approach. Parents, guardians and employers have been advised to have back-up plans in case changes are necessary.

“We are watching the case numbers closely, and while we are glad to be able to offer in-person learning now, we need our parents to be preparing for a shift in models if an upward trend continues,” said ISD318 Superintendent Matt Grose.

Itasca County is working with Minnesota state entities to host a mass testing event the week of Sept. 21 within the city of Grand Rapids. Anyone would be eligible for testing at no cost, regardless of insurance or income status, and no matter if they have had symptoms or exposure. Details will be announced as soon as they are available.

Itasca residents with questions or concerns may leave them at the Itasca County COVID message line, with calls returned 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784.

#### **Helpful links:**

Decision tree for people in schools, youth and child care programs - <https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/schools/exguide.pdf>

Minnesota Safe Learning Plan - <https://mn.gov/covid19/for-minnesotans/safe-learning-plan/overview.jsp>

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#### Itasca County Public Health media contacts

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