



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA COUNTY COVID CASES JUMP OVER PAST WEEK

(Grand Rapids, Minn., October 2, 2020) – Positive cases of COVID-19 in Itasca County still climb during a week that now includes a second area death, a man in his 80s. As of 8 a.m. on Oct. 2, 94 more cases have been confirmed over the past eight days, bringing the county’s cumulative case total to 396 and deaths to 16. These cases include 15 positives identified through drive-through testing on Sept. 23.

“To the family and friends of the gentleman lost this week in our community to COVID, our deep condolences,” said Kelly Chandler, department manager, Itasca County Public Health. “And to our neighbors in the hospitals right now, those on ventilators and struggling to recover from this disease, we have you in our thoughts and prayers.”

As of Oct. 2, 79 Itasca County residents are in isolation, including those in hospitals, due to COVID.

Exposure to COVID-19 among Itasca County residents is not necessarily related to single large events, but rather multiple events including local family gatherings such as weddings and funerals, worksites, and establishments such as bars and restaurants, according Chandler. “Now that we have more data and have done dozens of contact interviews over many weeks, the pattern in our county is becoming clear: our residents and visitors at greatest risk of contracting COVID is highest in local gatherings where people are relaxed, comfortable with each other, and not taking precautions such as social distancing and wearing face covers,” she said. “At the same time, we can see that there has been no spread of the virus within school buildings so far, even though we know there have been positive cases of students or staff.

“We are very pleased with the work the schools, students and families have done. With the protocols in place, including masking and distancing as much as they are able, we have not had any spread within school buildings. There is commitment to keep kids in person learning as much as possible.”

As of Sept. 27, Itasca County’s 14-day average case rate per 10,000 students stood at 22.3. School districts are monitoring this rate closely and are looking for a trend to determine if they should make a change in learning models – either more in-person or more restrictive, based on county trends over a 2-3 week period.



“We thank you, Itasca County families, for your commitment to slowing the spread of COVID-19 and helping our schools stay in-person as much as possible,” said Chandler. “We also have many restaurants and bars that have done a wonderful job of wearing and enforcing masking, have moved their tables at least six feet apart, are following the capacity guidelines, and have set up outdoor spaces for dining. We are so proud of our businesses who have embraced the changes related to COVID-19 and have made our community members who want to support their businesses feel safe and secure to visit.”

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:

Safe local activities for adults, children and families: www.getlearning.org

Ways to stay active: www.ymcaitasca.org

See the good: <https://thriveglobal.com/stories/10-things-you-can-do-to-stay-positive-during-covid-19/>

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Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. The next briefing will be Oct. 1. Recordings available. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us) or Anna Anttila (anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us).