

# District Health Department No. 4

**For Immediate Release**

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## COVID-19 Update

With evidence of community-wide spread of COVID-19, District Health Department No. 4 continues to work with and support our local schools, long term care (LTC) facilities and businesses to mitigate the spread of this virus.

There is no doubt that increasing infection rates pose greater risk for personal, societal, and economic impacts. Public safety remains a top priority and DHD4 is proud of the efforts within local schools, LTC and businesses throughout our community the past few months. Each day, it is a reminder of how critical our combined efforts are in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and keeping our communities safe and open.

DHD4 realizes that the community is suffering from "Covid Fatigue," understandably. However, this does lead to letting our guard down which is indicative of the dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases we are seeing. Residents may not be maintaining the vigilance required to prevent the disease from spreading.

Community-wide spread dramatically increases the risk to vulnerable residents; like we are seeing in an outbreak at Medilodge of Cheboygan. During a LTC outbreak, DHD4 works with each facility to investigate cases and to elicit close contacts and exposures. All residents and employees are monitored for COVID-19 symptoms. In an outbreak in which we can account for all those that might be at risk of exposure, DHD4 does not issue a public exposure notice.

"We extend our deepest sympathies and condolences to the family and friends of those who have lost loved ones at Medilodge of Cheboygan," said Denise Bryan, Health Officer at DHD4. "We know that COVID-19 is wide spread in our community, but an illness and loss of life at a facility serving some of our most vulnerable in our population is a sobering reminder that our community must continue to be vigilant with our actions to keep this virus from spreading."

During times of sustained community spread, residents should assume that whenever they leave home or gather with others outside of their household that it could be a potential exposure. DHD4 is seeing a big increase in COVID-19 spread amongst familiar groups: friends, family and coworkers. Small get-togethers (at home, bars, restaurants) and larger events like weddings, birthday parties and funerals are causing an increase in positive cases. Outbreaks at worksites demonstrate the need to social distance and wear masks during breaks and in commonly shared areas; in addition to regularly washing hands.

In a review of cases over the last two weeks in our region about 17% of cases are associated with travel (residents leaving to visit and residents having visitors), 19% are from known contacts in the community, and 20% are from a household member.

With hunting season and holidays approaching, these get-togethers pose increased risk of spreading COVID-19. Stay the course and do your part by wearing masks, social distancing and washing hands frequently.

“I think we all have to choose our “bubble” so to speak and be comfortable with that group, knowing that as the number of people increases, the risk increases,” stated Dr. Meyerson, Medical Director for DHD4. “Keep the number as low as possible. We should all consider modified holiday celebrations that are small, local, and encourage wearing of masks, social distancing, and proper hygiene practices to help slow the spread of the virus. If you choose to travel to visit with friends or relatives keep the number of households mixing small. Consider being very careful in the week or two before the visit, and careful for the week or two after the visit. That goes for those travelling and those who are being visited, especially if anyone in these groups are at increased risk.”

Everyone has a role to play in reducing the spread of COVID-19 so that our schools and businesses can stay open and our most vulnerable residents are protected.

For the latest COVID-19 information, visit our website at [www.dhd4.org/covid19](http://www.dhd4.org/covid19).

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