

District Health Department No. 4

For Immediate Release

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Administrative Services
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District Health Department No 4 adjusting contact tracing, case investigation processes

Due to significant case increases and more efficient spread of the COVID-19 Omicron variant in Michigan and locally, combined with waning public participation in contact tracing and case investigation, the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) and District Health Department No. 4 (DHD4) pandemic response will begin shifting away from universal contact tracing and individual case investigations. Starting next week, the greatest focus of DHD4's efforts will be high priority community groups and those in congregate settings.

“With more than 10,000 new COVID-19 case referrals per day being reported across Michigan – hundreds per week across our small, four-county jurisdiction – and the surge of Omicron expected to continue, individual level case investigation and contact tracing are no longer as effective with respect to controlling COVID-19 transmission on a population level,” said Devin Spivey, Epidemiologist/Community Health Director. “We will continue to provide guidance, education, and support for our communities at various levels so that people know what their test results mean and how to best move forward while limiting the spread of infection to their friends and family. but patience will be needed as we make this shift. Locally, our greatest focus will become monitoring and providing outbreak investigation and infection prevention support for long-term care facilities, shelters, schools and other congregate-like settings,” Spivey added.

DHD4 officials want to remind residents of four key points amid case increases and the Omicron variant being detected in all four counties within the jurisdiction:

1. Stay home if sick and experiencing any symptoms of COVID-19.
2. Get tested if symptomatic or once 5 days have passed after an exposure to a confirmed case of COVID-19. Stay home until results are received.
3. Wear a mask when out in public settings correctly and consistently, whether fully vaccinated or unvaccinated, as an extra layer of protection.
4. Get vaccinated and boosted. The safe and effective vaccinations are offered at a number of local pharmacies and at DHD4 clinics. See a list of locations at www.dhd4.org/covid19.

Individuals with positive results reported to the health department will continue to receive a text message and/or e-mail with educational materials and a link to an online survey where they can submit pertinent information about their case; thanks to a state partnership with Patient Education Genius (PEG). The survey only asks for information that is allowable under the Public Health Code and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) Privacy Act, such as demographics, symptoms, occupation, attendance at public events or gatherings, and people with whom they may have been in close contact. DHD4 staff will continue to answer resident questions via the COVID-19 hotline: 989-358-7936.

Due to the highly contagious Omicron variant, the Center for Disease Control has recommended that individuals wear a more secure, protective mask such as N95 or KN95 masks. DHD4 has a limited supply of KN95 masks available at no cost. Masks are available for pick-up at your local DHD4 office during normal business hours, excluding lunch (12:00pm-1:00pm) and holidays. One pack of 5 masks per person – first come, first serve! If you tested positive for COVID-19 in the last 10 days or are currently experiencing symptoms, please **DO NOT** enter the building, call your local DHD4 office so that someone can meet you outside.

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***For all media requests, please go to www.dhd4.org and complete the media request form.
Thank you.***