

Public Safety Alert!

March 24, 2020
Osage County, Missouri
Susan Long
Health Department

Good afternoon, this is Susan Long with the Osage County Health Department in Osage County, Missouri.

I wanted to provide you with what is currently going on in the county in regards to COVID-19 since my last report on March 21st. There are no positive cases in the county as of now. I have not received any additional negative reports since my report on Saturday. I know there were concerns in regards to one of the local schools. I did interview a person who has a household member diagnosed with COVID-19. They live in a different county. Through this interview, by the information given to me, I determined that the risk was minimal for spread in the school. This person was forthcoming and extremely concerned about the potential to have spread this to others. This person was also interviewed by the health department in this person's home county and if there had been concerns, either that county or I would have contacted any persons identified at risk over the weekend. I am in frequent communication with schools and businesses and the health department staff is in frequent communication with daycares, retailers, food establishments and other businesses throughout the county. We are providing information in as many forms of communication that we can.

I now want to discuss testing for COVID-19. There are now many more tests being done through private labs than through the state lab. They are all reporting to the state health department first. The state health department then sends the reports to the county that the person lives in so that there isn't any double reporting. The health department administrator/staff of the county in which a positive is reported investigates the case and notifies any and all close contacts and/or those they consider high risk for potential spread. The local health department will then continue to monitor the positive cases, those in quarantine and those in isolation.

Right now, the most attention and highest priority are on the lab-confirmed positive cases and their contacts. The state health department is reporting these first and IMMEDIATELY to the county and then getting the negative reports to the county after that. They have staff working on this 24/7 and they are getting information for all 114 counties. This is being done EVEN after hours. An investigation and contact follow up starts immediately no matter the time of day or the day of the week. It should be noted that it can take several days for final test results to be received depending on where the private lab is located vs where the testing was done.

There has been concern expressed that I have reported so few tests. I have reported what I have received. I do not know who is being tested or where they are tested until I receive the report. These are coming from varied sources outside the county. We have not been contacted yet as to when mass testing will be available in Osage County. Obviously, the counties with confirmed + cases and climbing numbers are getting higher rank for this based on needs. You can access the list which can change frequently on the state health department website. There is drive through testing going on in Jefferson City at Capital Region Medical Center and St. Mary's with a doctor's order. You may contact your health care provider for more information and an order if you think you might meet the testing criteria. I do not have information at this time as to when it might be available here for the public. I anticipate that I will start receiving more notifications as I am more than aware of where many people from this county work and play. I know that Osage County is not an isolated island in the midst of COVID-19 as people from other counties also come here to work and to visit with family members. I will continue to report on what I know and what I have solid information on.

I have been in public health for over 25 years and I have worked numerous communicable disease outbreaks over those years including SARS and MERS, the 2 other best known coronaviruses. The Osage County Health Department staff has done and continues to do communicable disease investigations in this county. Should anyone you know want to contact the health department directly with questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us at the Osage County Facebook page. Staff are monitoring this site all day and evening until they go to sleep. Our general email address is also available for questions/concerns. That email address is: osagecountyhealthdepartment@gmail.com. I will send out notification when and if a positive case occurs in Osage County as soon as possible. Please continue to use common sense, good hand hygiene, and social distancing. Thank you for your time.