

July 6, 2020

This message is from Susan Long with the Osage County Missouri Health Department. This last week brought us 5 new COVID cases bringing us up to 11 especially over this weekend. We saw an increase in the number of contacts that we are following up with also. All but 1 are travel-related whether due to travel to high-risk states or hotspots within Missouri. These exposures are all from prior to this past 4th of July weekend. I cannot emphasize enough for the need to social distance even from your own relatives who don't live in your household. I especially cannot emphasize enough the need to wear a mask if you are in a building with non-household members such as at a store or if you can't socially distance 6 feet from a coworker while at work! I especially cannot emphasize the need for masks if you are outside, BUT in a close crowd! The mask is for the protection of others which includes your family and friends! At least a third of our cases have not had symptoms following the national trend, but who were still positive and able to give it to others! I'd like to see businesses gently reminding staff and customers about the sense for wearing masks and for social distancing. Also let them know that their safety is utmost in your mind and let them know what you are doing to help keep them safe!

One of our positive COVID case investigations was reported to others by phone and over social media before the health department had even received paperwork. This resulted in numerous phone calls to the health department from terrified people, who many, as it turned out, were not exposed. Let the health department do its job. We know how to do COVID and numerous other communicable disease investigations and do it efficiently and thoroughly. We know how to determine who has had a close encounter and we know how to direct and educate these close contacts. We deal in science and evidence-based measures of control and not in panic.

There will be free COVID drive through testing starting tomorrow, July 7th through July 9th from 7am to 7pm at the old Cole County Health Department at 1616 Industrial Drive in Jeff. City across from DeLong's. I strongly suspect that this will be an extremely popular event as the National Guard hasn't been testing in mid-Missouri for over 3 weeks. You don't need a doctor's order for this. They continue to have drive through testing at St. Mary's and CRMC with a doctor's order. You just need to call your doctor's office.

I again, want to note that the Osage County Advisory urges those who travel whether on vacation or business, etc., especially to other parts of Missouri, the country or out of the country to quarantine for 2 weeks when you return. I'd also recommend testing also to protect your loved ones and your co-workers and customers. Please wear a mask while you are out of the local area. You aren't only protecting yourself, you are protecting those you love.

Thank you!