

Public Safety Alert!

October 4, 2020
Osage County, Missouri
Susan Long
Health Department

This is Susan Long with the Osage County Health Department. It is with sadness, that I have to report the second Covid-related death in Osage County. This person had been ill for several weeks prior to passing away. I will not provide any additional information on this person out of respect for the person and the family. We currently have over 200 cases with over 60 of those still active. The number of cases has doubled in the last month.

We have had reported cases of COVID-19 in several of the county schools since this started. Last week on Tuesday, we received 7 positive reports on school children and staff in 3 different schools. We have continued to get new cases in schools daily. We are averaging 25 to 35 contacts per child. We have been prioritizing the children as we have been directed to do by Dr. Williams with DHSS. We are calling as fast as we can, but each call takes on average 15-20 minutes to get information, provide education and answer questions. We have had as many as 6 of us working on calls and/or taking calls. We have been yelled at, cursed at and threatened with lawsuits. No child will be the exception to the rules. Yes, there is the potential for exposure at school and that is why we are trying to identify the close contacts at school and on the bus. Let me reiterate that a close contact definition is physical contact such as a hug, kiss or handshake OR being within 6 feet or less for 15 minutes or longer. This is also dependent upon timing of the exposure to the case and their start of symptoms or testing. If we honestly made a mistake in dates on the letters, then respectfully call or email. There are no secret plots or conspiracies to keep your particular child out of school, sports, band, and extra-curricular activities or any family events planned. I recommended in the information that I encouraged all the schools to send out before school started, that parents needed to have contingency plans in case their child or children were placed in isolation or quarantine for childcare. The schools and the health department are trying to identify only those children who have had close contact in school or on the bus or elsewhere.

I am discouraged when I hear from some of the school age cases about the parties and events they've been allowed to attend or taken to by their families. We've also been told of inconsistencies in enforcement of the individual school rules on wearing of masks in school during designated times or on the bus and children not staying in an assigned seat to help with contact tracing. This results in mistakes being made in regards to identification of close contacts. If your child is showing any symptoms even if you think it's just allergies, contact your child's doctor. I am reminding everyone to **SOCIAL DISTANCE, WEAR A MASK WHENEVER YOU ARE NOT IN YOUR OWN HOME OR YOUR OWN YARD AND TO DISINFECT!** It is hard on everyone to follow these restrictions including me, but it is especially important now that flu season is upon us that we ALL do the right thing. Yes, we received our first flu case notification today. Our staff started flu clinics last week and they will continue through October or beyond depending on the need. Our HIGH DOSE was delayed AFTER the supplier had given me what was at the time a firm date of delivery. I anticipate it should be in by the end of the week, but I'm not holding my breath.

We have additional staff hired and everyone is working just as hard as they can, but you need to do your part in this as well. Health is all of our concern and not just the health department or your doctor's office. Listen or read the messaging from reliable sources on COVID. Don't buy into conspiracy theories. For heaven sakes, if you have that much time to be online, on sites with "fake news", perhaps you should use your time instead, to know where each of your family members are at all times, to disinfect your house, or to sew masks for people who can't afford to buy them. I am reviewing the advisory which is due to expire tomorrow. Plan on some changes and please take the time to read it. I thank you for your time.