

Lake County Updates

- **COVID-19 cases, hospitalizations, and deaths across the United States are rising.** The United States is reporting over 150,000 new cases per day, and since November 20, at least one person dies every minute, every day from COVID-19 in the U.S.
- As of yesterday afternoon, **Lake County has had 36,556 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 1,542 probable cases, and 613 deaths.** Over **460,000** tests have been administered. **Lake County's recovery rate is 96.8 percent.**
- Since the beginning of the pandemic, we have been working to provide meaningful data to our community. **Based on feedback from our residents, we have introduced new features including Case Trends, Case Demographics, Death Demographics, and Testing and Hospitalizations to our COVID-19 data hub.** You can access this new information by clicking the tabs at the top of the visualizations section. <https://covid19response-lakecountyil.hub.arcgis.com/>
- During the colder months, people spend more time indoors, increasing the risk of the coronavirus spreading. **Take steps to slow the spread of COVID-19.** Wear a mask, wash your hands often, watch your distance – keeping at least 6 feet apart – and avoid crowds. The more steps you take, the more you are protected against COVID-19.
- **The Health Department continues to work closely with long-term care facilities** to prevent the spread of disease among this vulnerable population. In total, we have 90 long term care, assisted living, memory care, independent living, and developmentally delayed facilities.
 - Currently, we are assisting 61 facilities that have 2 or more cases reported. Throughout the course of the pandemic, over 90 facilities have reported 3,349 cases and 376 deaths.
- **The entire state moved into Tier 3 mitigation as of 12:01 a.m. on Friday, November 20,** due to the dramatic increase in COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations in the state and across the Midwest. This round of mitigations aims to limit social gatherings, encouraging residents to **stay home as much as possible.** Tier 3 Mitigations: <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-mitigation-plan>
 - The State recently updated its methodology to bring clarity to when Tier 3 mitigation metrics can be relaxed. To move from Tier 3 to Tier 2, a region must experience:
 - Less than 12% test positivity rate (7-day rolling average) for three consecutive days, AND
 - Greater than 20% percent available intensive care unit (ICU) and medical/surgical bed availability (3-day rolling average) for three consecutive days, AND
 - A decline in the number of COVID-19 patients in the hospital (7-day rolling average) in 7 out of the last 10 days.

- North Suburban Region 9, which includes Lake and McHenry counties, entered mitigation on October 31.
 - Testing positivity peaked at 17.1% on November 13, and as of noon today, has decreased to 12.8%.
 - One trend we are watching very closely is our hospital bed capacity, which is declining in our region. Our med-surg bed availability is currently at 18.7% and ICU beds are at 22.8%.
 - Our daily hospitalizations for COVID-19 doubled in the first half of November, and have plateaued for the past two weeks.
<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics?regionID=9>
- **Lake County continues to be listed as orange ‘warning’ level on the Illinois Department of Public Health county-level map**, indicating increased COVID-19 risk. We have been at orange warning level since November 6. <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/countymetrics?county=Lake>
- **It is not too late to get your annual flu vaccination.** The CDC recommends **every person over the age of 6 months** get their flu vaccine every year. Visit the Vaccine Finder website (<https://www.vaccinefinder.org>) to find a flu shot provider near you.
- **IDPH is recommending that any residents returning from holiday gatherings get tested for COVID-19.** If a person has symptoms, they should get tested right away. If they do not have symptoms, they should wait 5-7 days after their last day of potential exposure to get tested. Anyone who gets tested for COVID-19 should quarantine and not leave home while they wait for their test results.
- **This morning the CDC announced updates to its quarantine guidance, as well as testing and quarantine recommendations before and after travel.** We are waiting on guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health to determine if the changed recommendations will be adopted in Illinois given our level of community transmission.
- **On November 20, pharmaceutical company Pfizer applied for emergency use authorization for its COVID-19 vaccine.** The FDA will be discussing the application and clinical trial data on **December 10**. On Monday, November 30, Moderna submitted its EUA application, which is expected to be reviewed on December 17.
- **On November 23, AstraZeneca and Oxford University** announced that its COVID-19 vaccine showed up to 90 percent effectiveness in certain dosage levels during clinical trials. Like the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines, it is a two-dose vaccine, but a benefit to this vaccine is that it can be stored at refrigeration temperatures for up to 6 months, which will make it far easier to distribute and administer in much of the world, should it be approved.
- **Once a vaccine is available**, it will be distributed in phases throughout 2021. An advisory council to the CDC voted yesterday to prioritize healthcare workers and long-term care facility residents and staff for the first phase of vaccinations. Priority will likely then be given to first responders, essential workers, and immunocompromised people, before being available to the general public. The next step is for the CDC to review and approve these recommendations.

- CDC and what you need to know about vaccines:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/index.html>
- CDC - Benefits of Getting a COVID-19 Vaccine: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/vaccine-benefits.html>
- CDC - Busting Myths and Misconceptions about COVID-19 Vaccination:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/about-vaccines/vaccine-myths.html>
- CDC - Frequently Asked Questions About COVID-19 Vaccinations:
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/faq.html>
- **The Washington Post has a great article outlining the current status of these vaccine candidates and answering frequently asked questions about vaccines.**
<https://www.washingtonpost.com/health/2020/11/17/covid-vaccines-what-you-need-to-know/?arc404=true>
- **The Health Department will be launching its mass vaccination registration system soon. Make sure you are subscribed to our email newsletters for updates** (English: <http://bit.ly/lccovid-19>, Spanish: <https://bit.ly/lccovid-19-es>). If you have an email newsletter or social media platforms, **please help us promote sign ups this month.**
- **Contact tracing is a critical tool for slowing the spread of COVID-19.** Calls and text messages from Lake County contact tracers come from 312-777-1999 and caller ID – IL COVID HELP.
 - **Please do your part; answer the call** and provide our staff with all the information needed. Through these calls and text messages, they ensure that people have information and the necessary support to isolate or quarantine safely.
- **LCHD continues its work with two community partnership groups**—Asociacion Comunitaria Latina (ACL) and the African American Community Partnership Group (AACPG) to address COVID-19 disparities along racial and ethnic lines.
 - These groups are starting to receive the first of 83,000 PPE kits for community members. If your organization is interested in obtaining kits containing reusable masks, disposable masks, hand sanitizer, and educational materials for your community, please contact Gale Graves at galegraves@waukeganpl.info
 - You can learn more about these groups on their Facebook pages:
 - <https://www.facebook.com/AACPLakeCounty>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/asociacioncomunitarialatinalc>
- Demand for testing is currently high in Lake County. **The Community-Based Testing Site at 102 W. Water St., Waukegan is open to everyone with or without symptoms.** The site offers free drive-thru and walk-up testing for those who do not have a vehicle or who use public transportation.
 - Testing offered at the site is the molecular PCR test done with a nasal swab to determine if you have an active infection of COVID-19. Testing is free.

- The site is open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m. Tests are administered by testing site staff using a nasal swab, and results are provided by phone in 4-7 days. **Current turnaround time has been reported at approximately six to seven days.**
- **The IDPH** mobile testing unit will be stationed in Lake County according to the following schedule:
 - Saturday, 12/5, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., **College of Lake County**, Grayslake
 - Sunday, 12/6, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., **Grant Community High School - South Lot**, Fox Lake
 - Monday 12/14, 8 a.m.–4 p.m., **College of Lake County**, Grayslake
- **Wearing a mask is one of our most effective tools to fight the spread of COVID-19.** The CDC shared research last week with new evidence that masks not only protect others around you if you are infected – they also help protect you from getting the virus. Remember that masks are not a substitute for social distancing, and you should still stay 6 feet away from anyone who does not live in your household.
 - CDC - Considerations for Wearing Masks: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover-guidance.html>
 - Lake County’s Mask Up campaign geared toward teens and young adults: www.maskuplakecounty.com
- **As a reminder, these conference calls are held the first and third Wednesday of every month.** Our next conference calls are scheduled for December 16 and January 6.
 - The key points, chat files, and audio recordings are posted to the Health Department’s website. <https://www.lakecountyl.gov/4428/Conference-Calls>

Policy

- The Affordable Care Act (ACA) **open enrollment began November 1** and ends December 15. This is the time when you can sign up for health insurance at healthcare.gov. People who are low-income and eligible for Medicaid can sign up at any time at <https://enrollhfs.illinois.gov/choose/compare-plans>. People who have lost their job-based health insurance are eligible for a special enrollment period.
- Illinois has extended the **moratorium on evictions through December 12. The moratorium applies only to renters who have earned no more than \$90,000 in annual income, or \$198,000 for joint filers during the calendar year, and are unable to make a full rent or housing payment due to a COVID-19 related hardship.**
- Visit www.lakecountyl.gov/forward to view how **\$121 million in CARES Act funding** is being distributed throughout the County.

Businesses

- In line with guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Lake County Health Department recommends that **employers should not require a negative test for an employee to return to work if that employee previously tested positive for COVID-19.** This is because a person may continue to test positive for the virus for months after their infectious period, even though they are no longer contagious.
 - Individuals with COVID-19 or their close contacts who speak with a Health Department Contact Tracer can choose to enroll in a daily health assessment which will provide a release from isolation or quarantine letter from IDPH.
- To date, more than \$16 million dollars has been distributed to 1,195 local small businesses as part of the Lake County Small Business Assistance Grants Program. Grant awards ranged from \$485 to a maximum of \$30,000. For a list of the local businesses that have received grants, visit www.lakecountyil.gov/forward.
- **Please continue to use the Health Department form for workplaces and facilities to use to report cases of COVID-19 and close contacts.**
<https://redcap.dph.illinois.gov/surveys/?s=NHECLHEHFP>
 - Information submitted is confidential and stored in a secure system. A member of our Communicable Disease team will follow up to provide guidance and perform contact tracing, as necessary.
- **Thank you, businesses, for all you are doing to keep your staff and customers safe during the pandemic.** This is no easy task, and we are grateful for your efforts and for following public health guidance. **If you have questions about how to operate safely, or to report a business-related concern, please call the Health Department's Environmental Health division at (847) 377-8020.**
- The Health Department has a new **Lake County Businesses email subscription list** for sending updates about upcoming conference calls and other important news. You can also provide your phone number to receive text notifications. Invite your colleagues or anyone else who may be interested to sign up as well. <https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/ILLAKE/signup/18495>
- **The Illinois Department for Economic Opportunity (DCEO) has a variety of small business and community relief programs.** For more information on programs available for businesses and communities, please visit DCEO website: <https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/default.aspx>
- **ComEd is offering a new bill assistance program to help local small businesses** facing financial difficulties as a result of COVID-19. Eligible small business customers that are past due on their energy bills can receive a one-time grant equal to 30 percent of their total ComEd balance (up to \$1,000) for a limited time. Customers whose electric service has not been disconnected can then set up their remaining balance due on a payment plan of up to six months. Visit ComEd.com/SmallBizAssistance or call 1-877-4-COMED-1 for more info.
- **Additional business resources:**

- **Lake County Health Department** <https://www.lakecountyl.gov/4412/Community-Guidance-and-Resources>
- **Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity** <https://dceocovid19resources.com/for-businesses/>
- **Lake County Partners** <https://www.lakecountypartners.com/>
- **Small Business Administration** <https://www.sba.gov/>
- **If you have concerns that your employer is not allowing for safe social distancing or that it is not maintaining a safe and sanitary work environment** to minimize the risk of spread of COVID-19, please contact the Workplace Rights Bureau of the Illinois Attorney General's Office at 844-740-5076 or workplacerrights@atg.state.il.us.

Municipalities

- **Many municipalities have asked what they can do to assist with vaccine dispensing. Here are a couple items that we are looking for:**
 - **If you have a public works drive through building** that can be used for a drive through vaccine clinic, please let me know. We will come out and assess if it can be used.
 - **IDPH is always looking for mobile testing sites. These can continue to operate in cold weather provided it is not high winds and rain.** Please contact us if you could provide parking lot space or help coordinate a location in your community for COVID-19 testing. pcorn@lakecountyl.gov
- Please continue to use and promote the Health Department's **form for schools, workplaces, and facilities to use to report cases of COVID-19 and close contacts.** <https://redcap.dph.illinois.gov/surveys/?s=NHECLHEHFP>
 - Information submitted is confidential and stored in a secure system. A member of our Communicable Disease team will follow up to provide guidance and perform contact tracing, as necessary.
- As of December 1, **Lake County has a new Coroner** (Jennifer Banek) and a **new State's Attorney** (Eric Rinehart). On December 7, Lake County will be swearing in **three new Board Members:** Gina Roberts (District 4), Carissa Casbon (District 7), and Paras Parekh (District 12).
- **To provide more rapid COVID-19 diagnostic testing, the Health Department is working with IDPH to distribute BinaxNOW™ COVID-19 Antigen Card tests to appropriate entities within our community.**
 - BinaxNOW™ COVID19 Antigen Card tests are antigen tests purchased by the federal government and disseminated to states for distribution. These tests provide more rapid results than PCR diagnostic tests.
 - Entities that are prioritized include schools, higher institutions of learning, correctional facilities, long-term care facilities, federally qualified health centers, essential/critical infrastructure workers, and homeless service providers.

- <https://www.lakecountyl.gov/DocumentCenter/View/37198/Guidance-for-Dissemination-of-BinaxNow-Tests-PDF>
- **You play a vital role in keeping your community informed about COVID-19.** Please utilize content from the Health Department's email newsletter in your own communications, promote sign-ups to your distribution lists, and share the Health Department's social media content whenever possible. **Thank you** for all you are doing to keep our communities safe!

Faith-Based Organizations

- To protect the health and safety of faith leaders, staff, congregants and visitors, **religious organizations and houses of worship are strongly encouraged to follow guidance from the Illinois Department of Public Health.** The safest practices for religious organizations are to provide services online, in a drive-in format, or outdoors with social distancing and mask wearing, and to limit in-person services to 10 people.
<https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/places-worship-guidance#:~:text=Some%20best%20practices%20include%3A%20Congregants%20who%20are%20living%20together%20sit,virus%20by%20projecting%20respiratory%20droplets.>
- The state also updated **funeral home guidance**, which includes information for conducting funeral services or visitations. <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/funeral-homes>
- **Please encourage everyone to be vigilant about following the 3Ws** if you do host any in-person events or services. Keeping a list of attendees and phone numbers can be helpful if attendees are exposed to someone with COVID-19.
- **The state reports COVID-19 outbreak locations on its website.** Outbreaks are defined as 5 or more cases linked to a common location. Region 9 has had two outbreaks in religious locations since July. <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/outbreak-locations?regionID=0&rPeriod=1>
- The state also shared data on potential exposure locations, based on information shared by people diagnosed with COVID-19. **These should be interpreted as locations where COVID-19 exposure may have occurred, not definitive exposure locations.**
 - In Region 9, there have been 31 cases of COVID-19 where a potential exposure location was a place of worship within the past 30 days.
<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/location-exposure?regionID=9>
- **Emily Gelber-Maturo is the Health Department's dedicated liaison for faith communities during COVID-19.** You can reach her by emailing egelber@lakecountyl.gov.
- Please continue to utilize the **Health Department's form for schools, workplaces, and facilities to use to report cases of COVID-19 and close contacts.**
<https://redcap.dph.illinois.gov/surveys/?s=NHECLHEHFP>
 - Information submitted is confidential and stored in a secure system. A member of our Communicable Disease team will follow up to provide guidance and perform contact tracing, as necessary.

- Make sure you are signed up for our **Lake County Faith Leaders email subscription list**. You can also provide your phone number to receive text notifications. Invite your colleagues or anyone else who may be interested to sign up as well.
<https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/ILLAKE/signup/18498>
- **Lake County Health Department Worshipping Together Safely guide:**
<https://www.lakecountyiil.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36546/Worshipping-Together-Safely---English>
- **Guidelines for Places of Worship are available on the IDPH website –**
<http://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/places-worship-guidance>
- **The CDC has a webpage dedicated to communities of faith –**
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/index.html>

Community Resources

- Anyone needing assistance finding food, shelter, rent or utility assistance, or other essential services can CALL 211 or TEXT your zip code to 898211 to speak with someone who can help. **211 is available 24/7.** <https://211lakecounty.org/>. This includes connecting to:
 - **Lake County CATCH:** 2 weeks worth of free meals delivered to families who have to stay home due to quarantine or isolation
 - **Lake County CHRP** (Coronavirus Housing Relief Program): rental assistance for families experiencing financial hardship due to COVID-19
<https://www.lakecountyiil.gov/4476/Lake-County-COVID-Housing-Relief-Program>
- **Live Well Lake County is promoting new behavioral health resources** for Lake County residents in response to pandemic's impact on mental health and substance use.
<https://www.livewellllc.org/takecare>. These resources include:
 - **A new telehealth network:** locations that people who have trouble accessing a computer or just need a safe, private place for a behavioral health appointment, can go to meet virtually with their provider. <https://www.livewellllc.org/telehealth/>
 - **Grief counseling groups and a Grief and COVID-19 Virtual Seminar Series**
<https://www.livewellllc.org/griefsupport/>
 - **Training sessions on harm reduction,** therapeutic tactics, public health strategies and substance use disorder treatments for both health providers and family members or caregivers. <https://www.livewellllc.org/harmreduction>
- **Many more community resources are available for those in need.** Visit <https://www.lakecountyiil.gov/4414/How-to-Get-Help> for an updated list.
- **If you are looking for opportunities to help others during this time,** please visit <https://www.lakecountyiil.gov/4413/How-You-Can-Help>