

Lake County Updates

- **The United States has had over 20 million COVID-19 cases and over 350,000 deaths since the start of the pandemic.** The virus is not only popping up in new places but also circling back to areas that once appeared to have it contained, causing record case numbers, hospitalizations and deaths. <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/>
- **Lake County has had 46,882 confirmed COVID-19 cases, 2,791 probable cases, and 769 deaths.** Over 600,000 tests have been administered. **Lake County's recovery rate is 97.5 percent.** <https://covid19response-lakecountyil.hub.arcgis.com/>
- **The Health Department continues to work closely with long-term care facilities** to prevent the spread of disease among this vulnerable population. Currently we are assisting 73 facilities with 2 or more cases reported. Over the course of the pandemic, over 146 facility outbreaks have resulted in 3,725 cases and 443 deaths.
- **New variants of COVID-19 have been emerging internationally.** In the United Kingdom, a variant of coronavirus has increased infection rates to their highest on record, and British Prime Minister Boris Johnson said stricter lockdown restrictions are coming. More than 50,000 new infections have been reported daily over the past six days. Scientists have said the variant is up to 70% more contagious than previous strains. Additional variants have been identified in South Africa and Nigeria. At this time, there is no evidence that these variants cause more severe illness or increased risk of death.
 - Information about the characteristics of these variants is rapidly emerging. Scientists are working to learn more about how easily they might spread, whether they could cause more severe illness, and whether currently authorized vaccines will protect people against them.
 - New COVID-19 Variants (CDC): <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/transmission/variant.html>
- After careful review of the CDC's [new options](#) for shortened quarantine, our health department continues **to recommend a full 14-day quarantine for those who are exposed to someone with COVID-19 in Lake County.** The Health Department will reassess the quarantine recommendations in the coming weeks as we closely monitor trends in cases following the holidays.
- **The entire state remains in Tier 3 mitigation.** <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/restore-illinois-mitigation-plan>. The Governor announced today that Tier 3 goes until January 15 to get through 2 incubation periods after the holidays. After that, mitigation tier is based on regional metrics alone.
- Due to the potential for a surge in COVID-19 activity after the holidays, the state is assessing trends and will soon determine timing for changes to mitigation measures, if appropriate.
 - In Region 9, our testing positivity rate is 9.8% as of January 2. This rate had dropped to 8.5% as of December 26, and has been gradually climbing again since.

- As of January 4, our med-surg bed availability is 15.9% and ICU bed availability is 24.8%, and we have seen decreases in hospitalizations in 6 out of the past 10 days. <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics?regionID=9>
- **Lake County has moved from orange ‘warning’ level on the Illinois Department of Public Health county-level map to blue ‘stable’**, indicating that COVID-19 risk may be stabilizing. However, rates of new cases indicate that Lake County continues to have ‘substantial community transmission’ of COVID-19. One metric, cases per 100,000 residents, continues to far exceed the state’s target, and if one or more other metrics trend in the wrong direction again, Lake County will move back to orange ‘warning’ status. <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/countymetrics?county=Lake>
- **Continue to be vigilant to prevent 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.
- **IDPH recommends 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 should quarantine and not leave home while they wait for their test results.
- **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. The site is open 7 days a week from 8 a.m. until 4 p.m.
- **A mobile testing unit will be stationed in Lake County:**
 - Friday, January 8, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Williams Park, 400 Williams Street, Antioch
 - Saturday, January 9, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m., Round Lake High School, 800 High School Drive, Round Lake
- **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.
 - We are working closely with our partners to develop culturally tailored outreach materials around the vaccine and will be hosting several events that address our communities’ unique concerns in the new year.
 - These groups have distributed 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/AACPGLakeCounty>
 - <https://www.facebook.com/asociacioncomunitarialatinalc>

- As a reminder, these conference calls are held the first and third Wednesday of every month. Our next conference calls are scheduled for January 20 and February 3.
 - The key points, chat files, and audio recordings are posted to the Health Department's website. <https://www.lakecountyiil.gov/4428/Conference-Calls>
- **On December 18, the FDA authorized the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine for emergency use.** The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices met on December 20 and authorized the use of the vaccine for individuals 18 years and older.
 - Both the Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccines are mRNA vaccines. They do not contain the virus that causes COVID-19.
 - Both vaccines require two doses. Pfizer doses can be administered at least 21 days apart, and Moderna doses are administered at least 28 days apart.
 - Pfizer showed 95% effectiveness at preventing COVID-19 illness in its clinical trials, and Moderna showed 94.1% effectiveness.
 - Pfizer-BioNTech FDA Fact Sheet: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144414/download>
 - Moderna FDA Fact Sheet: <https://www.fda.gov/media/144638/download>
- **As of December 31, 152,000 have registered on the Lake County AllVax Portal,** our online platform where you can register yourself and your household for COVID-19 vaccination. Registering is free, easy, and secure. <https://AllVax.lakecohealth.org>
 - By providing basic information and answering a few screening questions, you will be notified when a COVID-19 vaccine is available. Then you will be able to schedule an appointment at a Lake County Health Department vaccination clinic.
 - Residents who need assistance registering can call (847) 377-8130 or email AllVax@lakecountyiil.gov.
 - The screening questions used during registration are based on CDC prioritization of populations for COVID-19 vaccination. As priority groups for future vaccination stages are finalized, the portal will be updated, and people will be able to update their information to ensure the right people receive their vaccine at the right time.
 - Lake County's goal is to vaccinate 80% of our population. We ask for your partnership in sharing this important resource and encouraging anyone who lives or works in Lake County to register.
 - A FAQ page continues to be updated with common questions about AllVax and COVID-19 vaccines. <https://allvax.lakecohealth.org/s/topic/0TO4W000000hqBUWAY/resident>
- **Community organizations, municipalities, businesses, and faith centers are invited to help support COVID-19 vaccination across Lake County by becoming a Community Health Ambassador.**
 - Community Health Ambassadors will receive step-by-step registration guidance, answers to COVID-19 FAQs that they can relay to their communities, promotional

materials, and recognition for the important role they play in restoring Lake County communities.

- Sign up here: https://lchd.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_e3BOCd49aly8xFz
- **On December 17, the Health Department received its first shipment of over 6800 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine, which were immediately redistributed to Lake County hospitals to vaccinate their frontline staff.** As of December 31, the Health Department has received 10,725 doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech vaccine and 1,200 doses of the Moderna vaccine. An additional 7,600 doses of the Moderna vaccine have been shipped directly to hospitals and a separate shipment to Naval Station Great Lakes.
- **Right now we are in Phase 1a of vaccinations.** Following guidelines from the CDC, only healthcare personnel and long-term care facility residents can receive their vaccine at this time. This phase is expected to last through most of January, and possibly longer. Healthcare personnel are defined in the State's Mass Vaccination Plan, page 13-14: <http://www.dph.illinois.gov/sites/default/files/COVID19/IL%20COVID-19%20Vaccination%20Plan%20V4%2012.31.2020.pdf>
- **The Lake County Health Department is providing vaccines as they become available to healthcare workers who are not affiliated with a hospital system.** These began December 28 and are by appointment only. People must be registered in the AllVax system to be notified to schedule their appointment. Appointments are only offered as we receive vaccine supply.
 - The Health Department administered 663 vaccinations its first week of clinics, and we expect to vaccinate up to 1,200 additional healthcare personnel this week.
 - We have set up a COVID-19 Vaccine web page for the latest updates: <https://www.lakecountyl.gov/4521/COVID-19-Vaccine>
- **Vaccinations at long-term care facilities in Lake County also began on December 28, 2020.** These are vaccinations are being done by Walgreens and CVS through the federal Pharmacy Partnership Program. We are hearing of the excitement among staff and residents who are being vaccinated including a 106-year-old LTCF resident vaccinated this week.
- **On December 22, the CDC [updated](#) its recommendations for the next groups to be vaccinated in Phase 1b and 1c.**
 - Those in Phase 1b will include:
 - Seniors age 75 and older.
 - Frontline essential workers (first responders, teachers and support staff, public transit employees, grocery store staff, and daycare workers).
 - People working in food and agriculture, manufacturing, corrections, and the US Postal Service.
 - Those in Phase 1c will include:
 - Older adults age 65–74.

- Persons aged 16–64 with medical conditions known to increase the risk of severe illness from COVID-19.
- **The Lake County Health Department is strictly following the CDC’s list of certain health conditions for vaccine prioritization.** The CDC’s official [December 22 report](#) prioritizes a list of conditions, backed by clinical data of millions of COVID-19 cases and thousands of deaths, that show a person is at high risk of severe illness or death from COVID-19.
 - [If more detail needed] For Phase 1c, this list includes: cancer; chronic kidney disease; chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); Down Syndrome; heart conditions, such as heart failure, coronary artery disease, or cardiomyopathies; immunocompromised state (weakened immune system) from solid organ transplant; obesity (body mass index [BMI] ≥ 30 kg/m² but < 40 kg/m²); severe obesity (BMI ≥ 40 kg/m²); sickle cell disease; smoking; type 2 diabetes mellitus; and pregnancy. (These are listed out in the footnotes of the report.)
- The CDC has another list of conditions that **may** increase risk for severe illness from COVID-19. That list is not included in the ACIP recommendations at this time.
 - If data shows in the future that conditions like Type 1 diabetes puts a person at severe risk, we would expect the recommendations to change, and our AllVax system is designed so we can update the system and prompt people who are registered to update their health conditions so they can be appropriately prioritized.
- **Lake County is hosting its next Virtual Town Hall on January 13 at 7 p.m.** Lake County Board Chair Sandy Hart will host a discussion with Health Department Executive Director Mark Pfister, Medical Epidemiologist Dr. Sana Ahmed, and others about the County’s vaccination efforts and answer related questions from the community.
 - **Zoom Registration:** https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_yYI-bVyLSsGXarHzqTtejg
- **We understand that our residents have many questions about the COVID-19 vaccine.** Yesterday we released a Top 12 Questions about the COVID-19 vaccine video that can answer the most common questions we have been receiving. Please watch and share.
 - <https://www.facebook.com/healthdepartment/videos/135736768262053/>
- **Make sure you are subscribed to our email newsletters for updates** (English: <http://bit.ly/lccovid-19>, Spanish: <https://bit.ly/lccovid-19-es>).

Policy

- **Illinois has extended the moratorium on evictions through January 9.** 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. Under the new Executive Order, tenants must complete this declaration and provide it to their landlord to protect themselves from eviction. <https://df7qosnywqs6g.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/Tenant-Declaration-Forms-12.12.20.pdf>

- Visit www.lakecountyiil.gov/forward to view how **\$121 million in CARES Act funding** is being distributed throughout the County.

Businesses

- **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.**
- 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 just over 1,200 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.lakecountyiil.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.
- 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. <http://ComEd.com/SmallBizAssistance>

- **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:**
 - **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
- **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!
- 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.

Faith-Based Organizations

- **Illinois Catholic bishops joined U.S. bishops' statement on COVID-19 vaccines, which says Moderna and Pfizer vaccines are morally acceptable,** and urges Catholics to read a document on Moral Considerations Regarding the COVID-19 Vaccine.

- English Statement: [COVID-19Vaccines_Dec182020FINAL.pdf \(ilcatholic.org\)](#)
- Spanish Statement: [COVID-19Vaccines_Dec182020FINAL_SPANISH.pdf \(ilcatholic.org\)](#)
- 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 of visitations. <https://www.dph.illinois.gov/covid19/community-guidance/funeral-homes>
- **Lake County Health Department Worshipping Together Safely guide has been updated:** <https://www.lakecountyiil.gov/DocumentCenter/View/36546/Worshipping-Together-Safely--English>
- **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 (2 or more cases in congregate settings like long-term care facilities and daycares). 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 43 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@lakecountyiil.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=NHECLHEFP>
 - 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>
- **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 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.lakecountyl.gov/4476/Lake-County-COVID-Housing-Relief-Program>
- **Many more community resources are available for those in need.** Visit <https://www.lakecountyl.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.lakecountyl.gov/4413/How-You-Can-Help>