

A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH COMMISSIONER



Dear Community Members:

Medina County has unfortunately reached another record week, reporting over 100 new COVID-19 cases in the last seven days. This week's case count is consistent with our most recent trends, with the average age of sick people getting lower and lower. This week, close to 25% of new cases were under the age of 19.

You've heard the Governor and the Health Department talk a lot about community spread and what that means for us. I think it can be easy to get comfortable in certain situations and let your guard down around people you would normally spend your time with. But with current cases we know the virus is gaining speed in those settings, not slowing down. It might be easy to assume our youth are getting sick from sports or extra-curriculars, but that really has not been the case. We are finding more disease spread happening from social gatherings, parties, and other interactions which then brings illness into the sporting and organized events.

There have been a few situations in our county where groups of athletes have been quarantined, but there have also been others where we have been able to determine close contact was not an issue. The same protocol will be followed once our schools start too. There won't be a one-size fits all answer when confirmed cases arise. Date of symptom onset, date and length of exposure, and proximity all play a factor in making these decisions. And when situations like this happen, I know parents want as much information as possible. And rightfully so. As a parent myself, I understand how important it is to feel comfortable and safe with your kids in these situations. The Health Department and your schools are working together closely to follow the CDC guidelines and will assess each situation on a case by case basis. The best thing you can do as a parent or grandparent is to help limit potential exposures by keeping gatherings small.

The state is working on orders for schools on how they will report confirmed cases in students and staff. That information is still being worked through to develop the most thoughtful and transparent approach while still protecting students' privacy. We've received a lot of questions about what this will look like, but the format and frequency of that reporting is not yet known.

I know that Medina County can balance infection control with other important priorities because educating our children and building our businesses are critical to the future. Some of the decisions made back in March that closed schools and businesses were because of unknowns. Flash forward to now, so much more is known about ways to treat the infection and what actions are necessary to manage and live with the virus circulating. We are coming into this school year armed with better information. Our school districts, just like when our businesses reopened, have adjusted their environments and processes to be more protective. I hope families are feeling comfortable and confident moving forward but still maintain a level of caution. Our schools and extra-curriculars have the safe guards in place; it's what we are doing outside of those environments that I urge everyone to consider.

This coming holiday weekend will be an opportunity to continue our efforts in trying to slow the spread of COVID-19. With every interaction you have, I encourage you to consider the risk. The more we can hold off on large social gatherings to limit our chances of exposure, the safer it will be for our students and athletes to move forward.

Where can I find the latest information?

Medinahealth.org and Coronavirus.ohio.gov have the latest real-time information. Information for parents and school administrators on safely returning to schools and extra-curricular activities can be found here:

<http://medinahealth.org/community/current-outbreaks/schools/>.