

## A MESSAGE FROM THE HEALTH COMMISSIONER

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Dear Community Members:

This past week marked six months since the first reported case of COVID-19 in Medina County. The Health Department has been on quite a journey since then, but our role in fighting this pandemic began long before that.

The purpose of public health is to prevent disease, prolong life, and promote overall health and wellbeing throughout the community. This doesn't just happen when flu season or a pandemic like coronavirus strikes, much of our job happens behind the scenes through ongoing research and prevention, collaboration with local partners, and data surveillance.

Data plays a huge role in public health. It determines the severity of a problem, it's used to monitor the effectiveness of intervention, and influences the policies put in place to manage the issue. With coronavirus, we developed our public data dashboard to show the community the truest picture we could about how the virus is affecting our community. We are aware of the questions/concerns of inconsistencies in numbers between what we report and what the state reports. I wanted to use today's space to hopefully explain why this happens.

The Ohio Department of Health (ODH) collects and reports data based on date of illness onset. If that date is not known, they default to the date lab specimens are taken or the earliest known date. These cases are accurate, but it can be a little confusing because if a case is reported on a Tuesday, that person's symptoms could have started several days before that, and that is the date ODH reports on their dashboard. The state is also collecting data from every county in Ohio and often times there can be delays or a lag in time that data gets collected.

Medina County Health Department (MCHD) collects and reports data by the date the case is reported to us because this date is always known and helps with maintaining consistency. We are able to report in more real-time and with minimal delay.

There is an uptick in cases among our college students which has created another inconsistency in data. If a college student gets sick and stays at school during their isolation period, their case is counted in the county of the school. Medina does not include that case in our numbers. However, if that student returns home for isolation, we would count their case in our numbers because our team does the monitoring and isolation procedures. Once the student is cleared and returns to school, ODH transfers the student to the health department where the college is located but we continue to include these cases in the data because they were isolated and cleared by us. ODH doesn't include cases that isolated in Medina County but returned back to school in their data.

While reporting can look a little different, I want to assure you that public health reporting is accurate. On the local level, we have the opportunity to report in a more real-time way. I hope this helps provide you with the best picture possible of what's going on in Medina County and helps you understand why some of the decisions or orders are being put into place.

### **Where can I find the latest information?**

Medina County Health Department's coronavirus data dashboard is updated every Friday afternoon. You can find the dashboard here: [www.medinahealth.org/community/current-outbreaks/data/](http://www.medinahealth.org/community/current-outbreaks/data/). For other information and resources you can use to help make decisions that are best for you and your family, visit [Medinahealth.org](http://Medinahealth.org). The Ohio Department of Health's coronavirus dashboard can be found here: <https://coronavirus.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/covid-19/home>