
HEALTH DEPARTMENT
NEWS RELEASE



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

November 20, 2020

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KENT COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT ISSUES PUBLIC HEALTH WARNING

New recommendations are designed to stem skyrocketing COVID-19 infection rates

GRAND RAPIDS, MICH. (November 20, 2020) – Dr. Adam London, administrative health officer at the Kent County Health Department, has issued a public health warning and strong guidelines aimed at curbing community-wide spread of the coronavirus in Kent County and preventing another economic shutdown.

With more than 650 new cases per day and positivity rates holding well above 15% – the highest local rates since the onset of the pandemic – the Kent County Health Department and area hospitals report that conditions threaten their ability to provide services essential for the health of the community.

“Our local infection rates have reached dangerous levels,” said London. “We need to take decisive, community-wide action to protect the health of our residents and to alleviate the pressure on our hospitals, frontline healthcare workers and public health case investigators and contact tracers.”

Acknowledging severe delays in the contact tracing process due to the current high rate of infection, the new guidelines outline steps the public should take if they test positive, have symptoms or suspect they have had contact with someone infected with COVID-19. They also guide employers in best practices for allowing employees to return from work following isolation or quarantine.

The warning advises against indoor residential gatherings of people from multiple households, including over the holidays. Guidelines urge businesses to strictly adhere to workplace protocols and encourage the public to support local businesses using pickup and delivery whenever possible, minimizing time spent inside public spaces. K-8 schools are reminded to diligently follow face covering, distancing and health screening guidelines. Expanding on the current Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) orders, high schools are advised to continue remote learning through January 15, 2021. Parents are cautioned to prevent children from gathering with friends outside of school hours and during periods of remote learning. Houses of worship are encouraged to temporarily discontinue large in-person gatherings. Finally, sports and recreational activities not covered by the current MDHHS order and that require close contact are also not advised at this time.

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KCHD has been in the business of providing health services to Kent County since 1931. The Health Department is home to nearly 260 employees including public health nurses, sanitarians, health educators, technicians, public health administrators, and specialized staff at the Kent County Animal Shelter. The Health Department operates one main clinic and three satellite clinics located in Kentwood, Rockford, and Grand Rapids. To learn more about KCHD services, visit www.accesskent.com/health.

700 FULLER AVE. NE, GRAND RAPIDS, MI 49503

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Business leaders from manufacturing, retail, and other industries, along with area chambers and economic development organizations weighed in on steps to slow the spread of the virus while keeping businesses open.

The Kent County COVID-19 Church Task Force has met weekly with leaders from the health department since the first documented case of COVID-19 in March. This week, the Task Force announced that more than 60 faith leaders committed to limit in-person gatherings at area houses of worship to help reduce the spread of the virus.

Finally, Kent Intermediate School District officials and a coalition of K12 superintendents from across the county worked with the department to finalize recommendations that affect area schools, athletics, students, and families.

London thanked public and private sector partners for joining in this urgent call to action.

“We commend area leaders and organizations who have joined in support of the recommendations,” he said. “In addition to protecting public health, they know that tighter measures now may help stave off another round of public health ‘stay home’ orders that shutter businesses and schools in the coming months.”

To read today’s Kent County Public Health Warning and related recommendations, go to https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public_Health_Warning_112020.pdf for English or https://www.accesskent.com/Health/pdf/COVID-19/Public_Health_Warning_112020_es.pdf for Spanish.

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