

Racine Public Health Dept.: Orders school buildings to close Nov. 27 - Jan. 15

Posted on Thursday, Nov 12, 2020

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City of Racine - Today, Dottie-Kay Bowersox, the City of Racine Public Health Administrator, issued a Public Health Order and updated the Safer Racine ordinance to require that all schools within the jurisdiction of the Racine Public Health Department (includes City of Racine, Wind Point, and Elmwood Park) to close their buildings and suggests schools switch to virtual learning from November 27, 2020, through January 15, 2021.

“COVID-19 is being spread throughout the community in the number of daily cases and rates of positivity that have not been seen before. Outbreaks are linked to family gatherings on private property with people from outside of their household including sports parties, baby showers, and backyard gatherings. In addition, through retail establishments and employment situations,” **said Dottie-Kay Bowersox, City of Racine Public Health Administrator.**

Bowersox continued, “Over the last 9 months after every major holiday, significant spikes in positive cases occur because individual gatherings in private residences do not implement the necessary precautions to ensure that they and others do not contract the virus. Given that, the Public Health Department fully expects to see a sharp increase in cases yet again between Thanksgiving, Christmas, and the New Year. Currently schools remain one of the largest gathering places within our jurisdiction and after the holidays, those children and staff could become super spreaders in the community.”

The Public Health Order and updates to Safer Racine will mean that both teacher and students cannot be in school buildings for teaching and learning, and that essentially buildings are closed for the timeline as outlined.

Over the past 7 days the City of Racine has seen cases surge with 680 new cases at a positivity rate over 35 percent and 2 new deaths, bringing the number of deaths due to COVID-19 to 42. During the same time period, the rest of Racine County has seen a similar surge, with 851 new cases and 8 new deaths. Wisconsin in general remains one of the nation's worst hot spots, seeing more than 7,000 new cases per day, as well as setting records for most number of daily deaths since the beginning of the pandemic.

"This is a difficult decision that will certainly make a segment of the population very unhappy. However, until all of our residents take the very real threat to health and life that this virus presents seriously, we will continue to have to make these tough decisions to slow the spread of COVID-19. Combating COVID-19 requires everyone to take personal responsibility for their actions, and the recognition that inconveniences now, like wearing a mask properly and not participating in family gatherings outside of your immediate household, are necessary to protect public health and save lives," **added Public Health Administrator Bowersox.**

The Public Health order reads:

1. Public and private K-12 school buildings within the boundaries of the City of Racine and the Villages of Elmwood Park and Wind Point shall be closed from November 27, 2020, through January 15, 2021, inclusive. This closure applies to all students, faculty, staff, and administrative personnel. Schools may continue to facilitate distance learning or virtual learning. Schools may continue to be used for Essential Government Functions, emergency services, building maintenance, and food distribution.
1. Duration. This Order shall become effective at 12:01 AM, November 27, 2020. This Order shall terminate on January 15, 2021, at 11:59 PM.

The Public Health Administrator is given the authority to make such public health orders under Wisconsin State Statute Section 252.03, Wisconsin Administrative Code DHS §145.06(6), and the City of Racine ordinance known as Safer Racine. Both the updated Safer Racine document and Public Health Order can be found at www.racinecoronavirus.org. Questions about the orders can be directed to publichealth@cityofracine.org or 262-636-9201.