

Waukesha County Public Health: Amends contact tracing to align with new recommendations

Posted on Thursday, Feb 3, 2022

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(WAUKESHA, WI) – Waukesha County Public Health will shift COVID-19 case investigation and contact tracing efforts to high-priority prevention and response activities, in alignment with [new recommendations](#) by the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) issued last week, and in a [joint statement](#) by multiple national public health entities. Isolation and quarantine recommendations are not impacted by these changes.

“Public health experts at the state and national levels recognize we have entered a new phase in the COVID-19 pandemic,” said Benjamin Jones, Waukesha County Health Officer. “The highly contagious, yet more mild, characteristics of the Omicron variant have decreased the effectiveness of disease investigation and contact tracing. Meanwhile, the community has many more tools available, including vaccination, better treatment options, widespread access to testing, and familiarity with strategies to stop the spread of this virus. Therefore, the best use of our limited resources is to shift from investigating all COVID-19 cases to focus on our most vulnerable residents.”

Under the new guidelines, DHS recommends public health departments prioritize staffing and other available resources on activities that yield the greatest impact in terms of preventing severe COVID-19 disease. Follow-up from local health departments is no longer expected or required for every COVID-19 case or contact. Instead, health departments are encouraged to focus on outbreak investigations and targeted case investigations in high-priority environments to prevent severe

disease and death in vulnerable populations.

This week, Waukesha County Public Health will deploy a new process for COVID-19 response to align with the new recommendations. This will allow public health to focus on surveillance, prevention, and high-risk settings.

- Waukesha County residents 18 – 69 years old who test positive for COVID-19 will no longer receive a communication from Public Health related to their case. These residents should follow [CDC isolation guidelines](#) and communicate their COVID-19 status to all close contacts.
- Individuals who are 70 and older, who are not affiliated with a long-term care facility, will receive guidance from Waukesha County Public Health in a letter.
- Parents and guardians of children 17 and younger can expect guidance from Waukesha County Public Health in the form of a text alert from the number 262-600-2255 (262-600-CALL).
- The County will continue to work with priority groups, such as schools, long-term care facilities, and businesses to manage outbreaks in these settings. Universal contact tracing efforts unrelated to an outbreak will discontinue.
- Any individuals concerned with managing their COVID-19 diagnosis are encouraged to contact their health care provider or Waukesha County Public Health at 262-896-8430.

These modifications to standards of practice within disease investigation and contact notification will allow Waukesha County Public Health to meet the current demands on disease containment in a sustainable way.

Isolation and quarantine recommendations are not impacted by these changes. If an individual suspects COVID-19 infection, they should seek testing, stay home to prevent transmission to others, rapidly notify close contacts of their exposure, and seek healthcare to facilitate access to medical treatment if they are at higher risk for severe outcomes.

More Information

Waukesha County remains committed to the health and wellbeing of the citizens of our county and continues to work diligently to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. More information about Waukesha County's response to COVID-19 is available at www.waukeshacounty.gov/covid19.