



News Release

Contact: Amy Blaser, Vice President

Phone: (402) 562-3371

Email: aebblaser@columbushosp.org

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**CCH, Local Health District See Increase in COVID-19 Cases;
Community Members Urged to Continue to Use Masks and Practice Social Distancing**

For Immediate Release

(COLUMBUS, Neb.) – Cases of COVID-19 have increased greatly in recent weeks as schools reopen, and other businesses and activities resume.

CCH is currently caring for six COVID-19 positive patients. This is an increase from late August when CCH was not caring for any COVID-19 positive patients or persons of interest (PUI).

As of September 11, the East Central District Health Department (ECDHD), which includes Boone, Colfax, Nance and Platte counties, was reporting 122 active COVID-19 cases in the district. This represents a 43.5% increase in the number of active cases from the previous week. Boone County had 38 cases with nine new cases, Colfax County had 736 cases with five new cases, Nance County had 16 cases with three new cases and Platte County had 930 cases with 35 new cases.

Within the district, the average number of cases per week has doubled within the last 11 days. This week also represents the highest weekly COVID-19 incidence rates in the district since late May. According to the ECDHD's risk level measures, Boone, Colfax and Platte counties were all rated at moderate risk as of September 11 and the risk in Nance County was low.

The district noted that the "pattern of COVID transmission continues to be known sources of person-to-person contact within the health district." As of September 11, no classroom transmissions of COVID-19 have been reported in the ECDHD, despite student cases of COVID-19 that have been tied to family members or social contacts. According to the ECDHD, mask policies in schools have minimized the number of people who have needed to be quarantined after exposure to COVID-19 positive individuals.

Community Safety Measures

In order to prevent the further spread of COVID-19 in our area, CCH is strongly encouraging people to continue to practice social distancing and wear a mask when they are out in public.

Masks are an important tool in preventing the spread of COVID-19 and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommends people older than 2 years old wear masks or cloth face coverings in public, especially in places where social distancing is hard to enforce such as in pharmacies, grocery stores and at gas stations.

According to the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), people should choose masks that completely cover their mouth and nose; have two or more layers of washable, breathable



fabric; and fit snugly against the side of their face so there are not gaps. People should avoid masks that are made of a fabric that makes it hard to breath and masks that have exhalation valves or vents. In addition to wearing masks and practicing social distancing, CCH is encouraging local residents to wash their hands frequently, and get tested and stay home if they are sick or have been potentially exposed to COVID-19. By practicing these safety measures, you can protect the health of those around you and potentially save lives.

As an added precaution to reduce the spread of COVID-19 in schools, parents of students are encouraged to pay attention to possible signs of COVID-19 and keep their children home if they were running a fever or displaying other symptoms of COVID-19. Symptoms of COVID-19 include: chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, tiredness, muscle aches, headaches, loss of taste or smell, sore throat, runny nose, nausea or vomiting, and diarrhea. Parents should then contact their child’s health care provider and consider scheduling a test.

CCH Safety Precautions

CCH is fully – and safely –operational after previously suspending programs earlier in the COVID-19 pandemic. To protect the health of all patients, staff and visitors, CCH is maintaining its visitor policy that one healthy support person will be allowed per patient. This has to be the same support person throughout the duration of the patient’s stay and the support person must be 19 or older.

To support its ongoing universal mask policy, CCH is continuing to accept the donations of homemade, cloth masks. The masks are for visitor use to conserve medical masks for patients and health care providers. Those interested in donating masks, can contact Dorothy Bybee at dabybee@columbushosp.org or 402-562-4745.

In coming weeks, CCH will continue to monitor the COVID-19 situation and adjust its safety precautions and policies as necessary.

Updated Directed Health Measures

At this time, DHHS plans to implement Phase IV directed health measures (DHMs) in Boone, Colfax, Nance and Platte County on September 14.

Phase IV DHMs will allow indoor gatherings at 75% of rated occupancy and outdoor gatherings at 100% of rated occupancy, though six feet of separation between groups is still recommended. The following sections will be removed from DHMs, though guidance will remain and its use is recommended: bars and restaurants; child care facilities; churches; gyms, fitness centers/clubs, health centers and spas; salons, barber shops, massage therapy services and tattoo parlors; sports; and wedding and funeral venues. For a full breakdown of the Phase IV DHMs visit <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Documents/COVID-19-Outline-of-Changes-to-Upcoming-DHMs-Phase-IV.pdf>.

For more information on COVID-19 or how CCH is handling the situation in our community, visit the “Coronavirus (COVID-19) Information and Resources for Community Members” page at www.columbushosp.org, call 402-564-7118 or check out CCH on Facebook, Twitter or Instagram.

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