

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COVID-19 UPDATES – WHY IT’S IMPORTANT TO CONTINUE TO STAY HOME

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Menominee, Shawano — Shawano and Menominee Counties continue to work through issues and concerns regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) response. The counties continue to take actions necessary for the health, safety, protection, and welfare of persons and property. This situation continues to evolve, and there are changes in information and guidance coming out frequently.

As of April 22, 2020, Shawano County has 6 confirmed positive cases of COVID-19 and Menominee County has 1 confirmed positive case. Three of the individuals who tested positive were hospitalized at one point. There are currently 0 deaths known to be due to COVID-19 in Shawano or Menominee Counties. The true number of infected individuals is likely much higher than the actual number of positive (confirmed) cases. We can only report numbers of those who are tested and get a lab-confirmed positive test result. Individuals can infect others with COVID-19 even if they are not showing symptoms. We continue to watch the increases in illness in surrounding counties.

Shawano-Menominee Counties Public Health Officer Vicki Dantoin adds, “Please know the health and safety of all community members is our highest priority. I’m urging Shawano and Menominee County residents to please stay home. We are working extremely hard to protect you. By staying home, you are helping to save lives. Thank you for your continued cooperation and patience during this difficult time. We will get through this together.”

On April 16, 2020, Governor Evers announced an extension of Wisconsin’s Safer at Home Order which will now be in effect until May 26, 2020. We continue to encourage people to follow the rules set by the Safer at Home Order, continue physical distancing, and limiting face to face interactions. The restrictions established by the Safer at Home Order will remain in effect until May 26, 2020 or until modified by a superseding order. This updated order does reduce some of the prohibitions from the initial Safer at Home order. Click [here](#) for a copy of the updated order. Click [here](#) for a frequently asked questions (FAQ) document regarding the order.

The Safer at Home order and some public health interventions appear to be working to keep the numbers of influenza like illness down in our counties. It is possible that our state closed early enough that we are not seeing a large number of cases right now. However, we know we are not free of COVID-19, we still have a lot of work to do to keep the number of cases from rising.

We recognize that the Safer at Home order has brought challenges to our lives. Although the order is meant to help protect health and decrease potential deaths, it is having many other effects on our personal lives and businesses. These challenges do not go unnoticed. However, public health officials across the state are gravely concerned about a sudden reopening of our state and local communities. We have been putting a lot of effort toward planning for how to reopen slowly and safely.

On April 20, 2020, the Badger Bounce Back Order was released by the Governor’s Office. This order is available [here](#) and shows the plans for

Wisconsin to reopen as soon as it is safe to do so. The goal of this plan is to decrease cases and deaths to a low level and increase capacity in the healthcare system so the phased reopening of businesses is possible.

At this time, we know that the ability to limit the number of deaths from COVID-19 relies on a few different factors. Across the state and within our community, we are working to improve some of these conditions. We are focusing on access to COVID-19 testing kits, ability of labs to run test results, access to personal protective equipment (PPE), contact tracing capacity, and building health care capacity.

Before reopening safely, the health care system must have the ability to test everyone who needs it and take care of those that are seriously ill without operating in crisis mode. In rural counties, we know that health care resources are very limited.

Healthcare providers are encouraged to test all people who are symptomatic, even patients with mild symptoms. This serves an important public health purpose in the next phase of Wisconsin's COVID-19 response, which will require aggressive efforts for finding and isolating cases in the community. Although overall testing capacity has increased for labs, there is still regional variation in the availability of testing supplies and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) needed to perform the testing at the local level.

The need for Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) continues to be a challenge within our community. Supplies are in high demand for health care providers, first responders, and other essential services. Sources to obtain these items are having difficulty filling requests. Shawano County and Menominee County Emergency Management continue to work on obtaining needed PPE through various sources.

Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department has been conducting contact tracing to assure timely isolation and quarantine. We have also been working with the Tribal health departments to increase our abilities to trace contacts for prompt isolation and quarantine.

This is a rapidly evolving situation and updates will be provided when new information becomes available. People are encouraged to access the Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department websites. Reach the Shawano County version [here](#). Reach the Menominee County version [here](#). You may also follow the Shawano-Menominee Counties Health Department on Facebook (<https://www.facebook.com/SMCHD/>).

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