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**NEWS RELEASE**

For Immediate Release

To: Local Media

From: Marie-Noel Sandoval, MPH, Health Officer

Date: October 2, 2020

**Rock County Public Health Department Announces That It Has Implemented Crisis Standards of Practice for Contact Tracing**

Health Officer Marie-Noel Sandoval announces today that the Rock County Public Health Department has implemented crisis standards of practice in response to the growing number of COVID-19 cases in Rock County.

Throughout September, 933 new COVID-19 cases were reported to the Rock County Public Health Department. This number is almost double the number of cases reported in any one month since the beginning of the pandemic. Additionally, the number of active cases (people who are currently sick with COVID-19) increased from 221 to 616. This increase has created an overwhelming number of cases and close contacts. Despite increased staffing and the assistance of the state contact tracing team, the number of people to be contacted has now exceeded the capacity of the Rock County Public Health Department. "We are no longer able to conduct the same level of contact tracing that we would during a typical outbreak. This pandemic has reached a level in Rock County that has forced us to begin to implement crisis standards of practice as suggested by Dr. Ryan Westergaard, Chief Medical Officer and State Epidemiologist for Communicable Diseases," stated Sandoval.

Dr. Westergaard released a memo to local and tribal health departments on September 15, 2020, outlining recommendations for crisis standards of practice for COVID-19 contact tracing and symptom monitoring. In Dr. Westergaard's memo, he provides possible modifications to the ideal standard for disease investigation and contact tracing. These modifications can help meet critical contact tracing needs and minimize the risk of further virus spread given the current resources available. The Rock County Public Health Department is asking for the assistance of Rock County residents to slow the spread of COVID-19 in our community.

**How can I help?**

**If you have tested positive for COVID-19:**

- Answer your phone. A Public Health Nurse or Contact Tracer will be contacting you to ask about your symptoms and provide you with guidance and resources.
- Notify your close contacts. A close contact is anyone with whom you have had physical contact or who has been within 6 feet of you for 15 minutes or more. Talk to anyone who was a close contact two days before you started to have symptoms until you began your quarantine or isolation. Let them know that you tested positive for COVID-19 and instruct them to quarantine for at least 14 days. A Public Health Nurse or Contact Tracer will be calling them to follow up.
- Stay home. Stay home and away from household members until you finish your isolation period.

**If you have been told by someone who tested positive that you are a close contact:**

- Stay home and self-quarantine. You should quarantine for at least 14 days. A Public Health Nurse or Contact Tracer will be calling you to follow up.

**If you have not tested positive and are not a close contact:**

- Avoid gatherings. Do not attend events such as sporting competitions, birthdays, or tailgate parties.
- Wear a mask or face covering. Face coverings limit the chances of spreading the virus from person to person.
- Maintain physical distance. Physical distancing can decrease the risk of spreading or catching the virus.
- Stay home if you feel sick. If you have any symptoms of COVID-19, no matter how mild, stay home. Do not go to work or run errands.
- Keep track of your close contacts. If you do get sick and test positive for COVID-19, you will need to know who you have been in contact with for at least the last two days.

Rock County Public Health Department thanks everyone for doing their part to help keep the community safe. "By working together, we can slow the spread and keep our economy open," said Sandoval.

Rock County Public Health Department serves Rock County citizens by collaborating with partners to ensure a healthy, thriving Rock County. For the latest information about COVID-19 in Rock County, visit the Rock County Public Health Department website at [www.co.rock.wi.us/publichealth](http://www.co.rock.wi.us/publichealth) or follow us on social media @rockcountyphd.

Please send all media inquiries to [Media.PublicHealth@co.rock.wi.us](mailto:Media.PublicHealth@co.rock.wi.us).

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