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Kenosha County Public Health modifies COVID-19 disease investigation procedures

In response to evolving needs and priorities in the ongoing COVID-19 response, Kenosha County Public Health has updated its disease investigation procedures, Health Officer Dr. Jen Freiheit announced today.

Public health staff will no longer attempt to contact each confirmed positive case of COVID-19 in Kenosha County, Freiheit said.

Rather, Freiheit said staff will be focused on resources and activities expected to yield the greatest benefit in preventing severe COVID-19 disease, hospitalizations, and death. Case investigation interviews and contract tracing activities will be targeted to the highest-priority scenarios, where interruption of ongoing transmission is most likely to prevent disease in the most vulnerable people.

This update is in keeping with guidance received recently from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officers, the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists, the National Association of County and City Health Officials, and other organizations, Freiheit noted.

"With the large volume of cases that we've experienced from the fast spread of Omicron, and the growing popularity of at-home testing — with which positive results are often never reported to us — it has become clear that our staff would be best focused on targeting contact tracing toward high-risk situations, such as outbreaks in group housing and in our communities of color that are disproportionately affected by hospitalization and death in Kenosha County," Freiheit said.

"We will also continue devoting resources to education and vaccination, which remains the most effective tool for preventing serious COVID-19 illness," Freiheit added.

Freiheit said people who test positive for COVID-19 and have questions about isolation and quarantine and other disease-related matters may contact the county's COVID-19 hotline, at 262-605-6799. Additional staff are being allocated to respond to calls and messages left at this number.

Simplified isolation and quarantine guidance, plus links to local vaccination and testing sites, are also available on the Kenosha County COVID-19 Response Hub website at https://www.kenoshacounty.org/covid-19.

"While some of our processes are changing, the basic things people can do to help prevent the spread of COVID-19 and serious illness remain the same," Freiheit said. "Getting vaccinated and boosted, wearing a well-fitting mask in indoor public settings, and getting tested if you believe you might have the virus or if you've been a close contact of a positive case — these are steps that we should still be taking to keep ourselves and those around us as safe as possible."

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