

# NEWS

July 29, 2021

## **Central District Health encourages added layers of protection amid increase in COVID-19 Delta variant cases; adopts CDC's community transmission levels for upcoming school year**

**CENTRAL DISTRICT HEALTH (Idaho)** – COVID-19 case counts in CDH's jurisdiction of Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties continue to rise, mirroring both the state and national trend of the Delta variants' impact on people, particularly those who have yet to be vaccinated for COVID-19. In late May and throughout much of June, CDH's jurisdiction saw some of the lowest levels of COVID-19 since last year. However, since the week of June 27, 2021, case counts, and percent positivity have been steadily increasing each week.

In late June, approximately 143 COVID-19 cases per week were being reported across CDH's four counties. One month later, CDH's jurisdiction averages 80 cases per day, with some days of more than 100 cases being reported. Since early July, percent positivity has been increasing, and in counties served by CDH, ranges from 7.3 percent to nearly 10 percent. Levels above five-percent typically indicate that not enough testing is happening in a community and there is more virus circulating than is known.

Recent Boise area wastewater testing also shows a significant increase in virus levels detected in wastewater with the Delta variant as the predominant strain. Past increases in wastewater-detected virus in the Boise area have been an indicator that the community will see an increase in positive laboratory tests. Already, the Idaho Bureau of Laboratories (IBL) reports an increase in the Delta variant across Idaho among clinical samples tested.

"What's concerning about these increases is that we know the Delta variant is highly transmissible and typically has more severe impacts. Our jurisdiction is still sitting at a 58 percent vaccine rate with kids under the age of 12 unable to be vaccinated who will soon be going back to school. Many measures throughout the community that were once in place like plexiglass at checkout stands, limited capacities, and even sanitization have relaxed in many cases or don't exist. We ask for people's personal accountability to prevail – wear a mask when you're in an indoor public setting, continue to prioritize hand washing and keep your distance, and we ask those who have not yet received a COVID-19 vaccine to do so," said Russ Duke, District Director for Central District Health.

Among the indicators of how our communities are responding to COVID-19, CDH regularly monitors local hospital capacity and the impact COVID-19 is having on their ability to provide the level of COVID and non-COVID care our communities need. “People who are getting sick from this virus and are needing hospitalization are almost exclusively among those who are not yet vaccinated. Since January 2021, over 99 percent of cases in the counties served by CDH have been among those not yet vaccinated and 96 percent of those who have needed hospitalization for COVID illness are among those not yet vaccinated,” added Duke.

### **What can you do to protect yourself right now?**

Though many have returned to pre-pandemic norms, given the Delta variant’s impact and increasing trends, CDH recommends people, regardless of their vaccine status, consider adding back some layers of protection when they are in public settings. Masking, physical distancing, and the COVID-19 vaccine are our best defense, and people are encouraged to use these measures, particularly in environments that are heavily populated, vaccine status is unknown, and when community transmission levels are considered substantial (50 or more cases per 100,000 people over a 7-day period) or high (over 100 cases per 100,000 people over a 7-day period). Currently (July 29, 2021), Ada, Boise, Elmore and Valley Counties are at the high transmission level. Wearing a mask in public spaces is recommended for CDH’s jurisdiction.

CDH’s [COVID-19: Considerations to Protect Yourself](#) guidance document offers considerations for adding back layers of protection in your day-to-day life.

### **CDH to use CDC’s levels for community transmission for the upcoming school year**

For the upcoming school year, CDH will use the CDC’s levels for community transmission rather than using its own system. Last year, CDH’s three-category system was created prior to the CDC’s release of a four-category system. Using the CDC’s transmission levels will allow for better consistency – particularly given the CDC’s updated guidance (July 27, 2021) regarding indoor public mask-wearing in communities with substantial to high transmission rates regardless of immunization status, and in all K-12 schools regardless of transmission rates or immunization status. CDH has updated several school-related guidance documents for the upcoming school year, including exposure and illness decision trees, and position statements on physical distancing and quarantine. The updated documents will be posted to the CDH website by Friday, July 30, 2021, at <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus-schools.php>.

As a reminder, CDH provides recommendations to schools and school districts – it does not and cannot mandate or require schools to follow recommendations. The Idaho Department of Education, independent schools, and school boards make final decisions for schools in Idaho.

CDH will begin posting weekly community transmission levels for schools in August once the school year begins. View community transmission levels by county at: <https://covid.cdc.gov/covid-data-tracker/#county-view>.

**More Information**

CDH continues to post COVID-19 case counts on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, and twice-weekly data pushes on Mondays and Thursdays. CDC weekly community transmission rates for Ada, Boise, Elmore, and Valley Counties will be posted to the CDH website; find data and updates at <https://www.cdh.idaho.gov/dac-coronavirus.php>.

CDH's call center remains open as a public resource Monday through Friday from 10 am to 2 pm at 208-321-2222.

**Media Contact**

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