

Our Vision: Healthy People in Healthy Communities
Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties

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South Heartland COVID-19 risk rises; impacts schools, long-term care, hospitals

Hastings, Neb – Today South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD) executive director Michele Bever reported on current COVID-19 conditions in the South Heartland District. The district COVID-19 risk summary score moved from 2.6 to 2.7, continuing at “elevated” risk (orange).

For the week ending October 14, SHDHD’s test positivity for COVID-19 was 16.3% and the three-week rolling average was 16.5% positivity. Bever said fifteen percent or higher is indicative of severe community spread. “Low community spread would be a positivity (percent positive tests) below five percent.”

South Heartland’s average number of daily new cases for the past 14 days ending October 24, was 66.5 per 100,000. “If we had low community spread, we would expect an average of eight or fewer new cases per day per 100,000,” Bever said.

Bever reported there were fourteen school districts in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties affected by COVID-19 as of Wednesday. Overall, there were more than 230 students and staff out from PreK-12 schools including fifty-four (57) individuals (31 students, 26 staff) in isolation due to testing positive for COVID-19 and over 170 students and staff in quarantine due to exposure to COVID-19.

In addition, Bever said there are six long term care facilities in the South Heartland district with staff, residents, or both who have tested positive for COVID-19 in the past 2 weeks.

As of Wednesday morning, there were fifteen (15) patients being cared for in South Heartland hospitals due to COVID-19, six (6) requiring critical care and two (2) ventilators in use. “Our local health system is feeling the impact of the increased spread and increased number of cases,” Bever said. A cumulative total of 69 residents were reported to need hospital care due to COVID since the beginning of the outbreak in March.

Bever encouraged residents to protect others and themselves wherever they are. “Maintain six feet of distance from people you don’t live with and mask up to reduce risk of close contact exposures. We need to reverse the current COVID-19 trends by avoiding the three Cs: avoid Crowded places, avoid Close Contact and avoid Confined spaces,” she said.

“We were able to protect our hospitals last spring by reducing our social interactions, which helped keep the spread of the virus in check. In other states, we see the peak of COVID-19 cases followed about four weeks later with a peak in deaths,” she said. “Our case numbers are continuing to rise. I hope that residents are concerned, too, when they see these numbers. It is up to each of us to take actions to change the course we are on.”

The levels of risk for COVID-19 spread are indicated on the risk dial as low (0-1.0, green), moderate (1.0-2.0, yellow), elevated (2.0-3.0, orange) and severe (3.0-4.0, red). The [COVID Risk Dial & Community Guidance](#) can be found on SHDHD webpages at www.southheartlandhealth.org. South Heartland District case counts and trends can be found on [SHDHD’s dashboard](#) of local COVID-19 case statistics. This dashboard, along with updates, guidance, news releases and other COVID-19 information and links can be found on the SHDHD website: www.southheartlandhealth.org. The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) provides daily updates to Nebraska's coronavirus COVID-19 cases on their Data Dashboard at <http://dhhs.ne.gov/Pages/Coronavirus>.