



"Deliver sustainable programs and policies in response to the public health needs of the community"

August 31, 2020

Dear Residents, Business Owners, Faith Leaders, and Officials,

In recent weeks, all areas of Illinois have seen increases in the COVID-19 positivity rate. Of course, some of that increase attributes to higher numbers of persons being tested. However, more testing, by itself, cannot possibly account for the higher positivity rate. Approximately 11,000 COVID-19 tests are conducted in Will County on a weekly basis, and our current positivity rate is 8.8%. **The virus is continuing to spread and infecting more people.**

On August 7, 2020, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) issued regulations requiring that all businesses, services, facilities or organizations open to the public must ensure that any employees, customers, or other individuals on their premises over the age of two are masked if they cannot maintain a six-foot social distance. While there are exceptions for those who cannot medically tolerate a face covering or for those who are actively eating or drinking, these exceptions are very narrow. It has been our experience that most businesses are compliant, and in addition, have posted signs, distanced their tables, and have hand sanitizer available for staff and patrons.

Unfortunately, the metrics in Will County required action by the Governor, and on Wednesday August 26th Governor Pritzker issued Executive Order #53 laying out further restrictions for Region 7 (Will and Kankakee Counties). These restrictions include no indoor dining in bars or restaurants, groups must reserve a table, no congregating, patrons must be seated at tables (at least 6' apart), and they must close at 11pm. Additionally, gatherings of more than 25 people or more than 25% of a building's maximum occupancy, (whichever is less) are prohibited, unless exempted by law or regulation. **This does not apply to schools.** Please see the attached document included with this letter that outlines the newest restrictions.

The Will County Health Department continues to do what we have been doing since the beginning stages of our response- support, consultation, education, contact tracing, working with Long Term Care Facilities and other congregate settings. Recently, we have ramped up our contact tracing and Epidemiology Investigation Staff with 40 additional staff. Our Community Health Center travels into the communities throughout Will County conducting COVID-19 testing at multiple sites every week. We are working with schools and other congregate sites to help them navigate the changing regulations and guidance. But...

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The COVID-19 virus is still here, and we need your help! I ask that you be a role model and wear your face covering PROPERLY. Follow the guidelines so we can get back to Phase 4. We all want to go back to the life we knew pre-COVID, but we have farther to go. Don't give up now, there is too much at stake health-wise and socio-economically. If you think this isn't serious, you must not know anyone who has or had COVID-19. So far almost 400 people in Will County alone have died from COVID-19.

Recently, IDPH released a statement indicating the need for further testing, which we support.

"In the face of increasing infections, we need to promote more testing, not less, to identify new cases and interrupt further transmission," said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike. "Given that asymptomatic individuals have been linked to virus spread, we will maintain our more stringent guidance to support testing of any Illinois resident who thinks they may have been exposed, as well as asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed cases 5-7 days post exposure."

This letter is an appeal to all of you to do your part in curbing the transmission of COVID-19. We all want to get back to our normal lives, but there is still too much at risk. This is a time to think of others. You may be healthy, but many others are at risk due to compromised immune systems and other serious (and sometimes not so serious) health conditions.

It's all about We, not Me Your actions will make a difference! Please do your part to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

If you see an establishment not complying with the requirements, feel free to call our COVID-19 hotline (815) 740-8977 or go to our website and submit a complaint in writing via the info@willcountyhealth.org link. We will investigate and do any required follow up, and if necessary, enlist the assistance of our local law enforcement agencies. Our goal is to gain compliance through education and support to make the Will County community a safe place to be.

If you have any questions concerning COVID-19 or the regulations, the below websites are very good resources. Additionally, we operate a COVID-19 Hotline Monday-Friday 8am-4pm, 815 740-8977.

My Best in Health,



Susan Olenek MAOL, PHR

Executive Director

Will County Health Department

And Community Health Center

Enclosure

www.dph.illinois.gov

www.cdc.gov

www.willcountyhealth.org

<https://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/default.aspx>

Resurgence Mitigations for Region 7

ANNOUNCED 8/24/20 | EFFECTIVE 8/26/20

Region 7 has exceeded IDPH criteria that trigger additional mitigations to combat a resurgence of COVID-19 and prevent uncontrollable spread. As detailed in the July 15 Restore Illinois resurgence plan, new mitigations will be applied if a region's positivity rate averages greater than or equal to 8 percent for three consecutive days, as it has in Region 7 from August 22 to 24, 2020. Region 7 includes Will and Kankakee counties.

Effective August 26, Region 7 will operate under these new mitigation requirements:

SETTING	MITIGATION REQUIREMENTS
Bars	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All bars close at 11:00pm • No indoor service • All bar patrons should be seated at tables outside • No ordering, seating, or congregating at bar (bar stools should be removed) • Tables should be 6 feet apart • No standing or congregating indoors or outdoors while waiting for a table or exiting • No dancing or standing indoors • Reservations required for each party • No seating of multiple parties at one table
Restaurants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All restaurants close at 11:00pm • No indoor dining or bar service • Tables should be 6 feet apart • No standing or congregating indoors or outdoors while waiting for a table or exiting • Reservations required for each party • No seating of multiple parties at one table
Meetings, social events and gatherings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limit to lesser of 25 guests or 25% of overall room capacity • No party buses • Gaming and Casinos close at 11:00pm, are limited to 25 percent capacity, and follow mitigations for bars and restaurants, if applicable
Organized group recreational activities (fitness centers, sports, etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change • All Sports Guidance effective August 15, 2020, remains in effect • Outdoor Activities (not included in the above exposure settings) continue per current DCEO guidance

IDPH will track the positivity rate in Region 7 over a 14-day monitoring period to determine if mitigations can be relaxed, if additional mitigations are required, or if current mitigation should remain in place. If the positivity rate averages less than or equal to 6.5 percent over a 14-day period, the region will return to Phase 4 mitigations under the Restore Illinois Plan. If the positivity rate averages between 6.5 percent and 8 percent, IDPH will continue to monitor the region to determine if additional mitigations are needed. If the positivity rate averages greater than or equal to 8 percent after 14 days, more stringent mitigations will be applied to further reduce spread of the virus.

Follow the latest regional metrics at: <https://dph.illinois.gov/regionmetrics>