



## Health Department

Empowered to Live Well

October 30, 2020

Dear South Milwaukee and St. Francis residents and community leaders:

The South Milwaukee/St. Francis Health Department, along with community leaders and residents have been responding to COVID-19 for the past nine months. We certainly recognize the toll this response has taken on everyone as we grow weary of the messages to wear masks, stay physically distant, not engage in large gatherings, etc. Throughout the summer we were able to keep our case numbers under control and did not surpass the resources of our healthcare systems. As we move into fall and soon winter, we see case numbers rising locally, across Wisconsin, and across the country.

The growing number of cases is alarming because these cases have a direct impact on our health department's ability to prevent further spread in the community, and our ability to investigate and contact trace everyone with or exposed to COVID-19. Moreover, we are also deeply concerned about the healthcare systems capacity to care and treat those who need the most urgent medical care.

South Milwaukee and St. Francis, along with Milwaukee County, has reached a critical level of disease activity and burden. In reviewing our [Milwaukee County Key Indicators](#), three of the five indicators have recently turned Red. These indicators include *Cases* having a significantly positive trend, *Testing* above 10% positive, and *Tracing* being less than 50% of cases and contacts being notified within 24-48 hours. The indicators for *Care* and *PPE* are currently in Yellow.

**How are health departments responding to the surge in COVID-19 cases?** The South Milwaukee/St. Francis Health Department, along with the other Milwaukee County health departments, developed a prioritization framework to respond to confirmed COVID-19 positive cases in the event that our health department reaches a point where we do not have the staff resources to contact all cases. Some local health departments have already reached this point, while others, including North Shore Health Department, continue to contact all confirmed cases. Though, we recognize we may quickly exceed our ability to do this. This framework provides guidance for our health department and others on how to prioritize follow-up on COVID-19 cases should we reach a point where we do not have the staff resources to contact all cases. In the event we reach this threshold, the Health Department will prioritize contacting the following COVID-19 positive residents:

- Adults aged 65 and older;
- Children who are 19 years old and younger;
- College age students;
- Individuals connected to a facility outbreak or potential outbreak;
- All other individuals will be contacted as capacity allows

Putting this framework in place is necessary in anticipation of the continued escalation of COVID-19 cases. Additionally, the Health Department is **asking residents with COVID-19** to proactively do the following:



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- Stay home and isolate for a minimum of 10 days after symptom onset per [these instructions](#). If you did not have symptoms and were tested, remain isolated for 10 days from the date of testing.
- You can return to work or school on day 11 if meeting the criteria (free of fever and improvement in other symptoms for 24 hours).
- Notify your employer or school.
- Notify your [close contacts](#) and ask them to quarantine for 14 days from the last day of contact with you with these [instructions](#).

**What can the community do?** Our key indicators no longer reflect conditions where it is safe to participate in non-essential public gatherings and outings. The South Milwaukee/St. Francis Health Department, along with other suburban Milwaukee County Health Departments, are strongly recommending all residents and business fall back to **PHASE B** of the Phased Reopening Plan. Guidelines for Phase B under this plan include:

- Public gatherings limited to 10 people;
- Occupancy limits for restaurants and bars at 50% capacity. Customers must all be seated unless entering, exiting, or using the restrooms. Dance floors should be closed;
- Occupancy limits for retail establishments, salons and spa services, and gyms and places of amusement at 25% capacity.

Risk mitigation is of primary importance this fall and winter. By reducing the number of people in our establishments, and forgoing public gatherings, we will maximize other mitigation efforts like wearing cloth masks, cleaning and disinfecting, and handwashing. For businesses, we encourage you to visit the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation ([WEDC](#)) and Occupational Safety and Health Association ([OSHA](#)) websites for information on safe business practices in your respective industries. The mitigation strategies offered by these agencies can further support our collective efforts to slow the spread.

The health and safety of those in our communities is our first priority. We thank you for your continued patience and cooperation in this unprecedented public health crisis. For additional information you can view the websites for the [Wisconsin Department of Health Services](#), and the [Centers for Disease Control](#) or call the South Milwaukee/St. Francis Health Department at 414-768-8055.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jacqueline M. Ove".

Jacqueline Ove

Public Health Administrator/ Health Officer