

## NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **New Directed Health Measures Start October 21st**

Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) has received updated Directed Health Measures for the nine counties in the health district. Changes include moving back to 50% capacity for indoor gatherings and events, limiting groups to 8 people, and requiring patrons to remain seated at bars and restaurants. Outdoor gatherings are still at 100%. These changes will be in effect from October 21<sup>st</sup> to November 30<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

SWNPHD had 137 new cases of COVID-19 reported from October 13th to October 19th at noon. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 32; Dundy – 1; Frontier – 13; Furnas – 9; Hayes – 8; Hitchcock – 9; Keith – 14; Perkins – 10; Red Willow – 41. This brings the totals for the health district to 572 cases with 352 cases recovered. Many of these cases are linked to direct contact with another positive case; however, community spread is occurring across all nine counties.

SWNPHD joins with local and state leadership in appeal to business owners and parents to do the right thing to keep the schools open. If the schools close, businesses are also going to suffer, not only with financial difficulties but with staffing because their employees may have childcare issues and not be able to attend work. It is vital that each community take action to reduce the spread of the virus by encouraging their residents to avoid the 3 C's: 1) crowded places, 2) close contact, and 3) confined spaces.

For those occasions when close contact or confined spaces are unavoidable, it is best to have all participants wear a face covering or mask. When masks are worn properly by all, they provide enough protection that if there is a participant that tests positive the others will not be required to self-quarantine. Instead they will be asked to monitor themselves for symptoms of COVID-19 and limit their contacts in public.

The COVID-19 Community Risk Dial for the week of October 19th remains at orange, meaning residents of southwest Nebraska have a high risk of contracting COVID-19. Testing is still available but may require travel. Healthcare systems in the health district and across the state are burdened by the number of people hospitalized for COVID-19. Orange level recommendations include wearing a mask in public, washing hands and surfaces often, limiting travel, and working from home when possible. High-risk and vulnerable individuals should avoid public places.

COVID-19 information is available at [dhhs.ne.gov](http://dhhs.ne.gov) and [swhealth.ne.gov](http://swhealth.ne.gov). You can also follow SWNPHD on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. SWNPHD serves Chase, Dundy, Frontier, Furnas, Hayes, Hitchcock, Keith, Perkins, and Red Willow counties. SWNPHD is located at 404 West 10th St (1 block north of Arby's) in McCook. ###