

NEWS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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COVID-19 Cases Drop Below 100

COVID-19 cases and hospitalizations continue to decrease in Southwest Nebraska Public Health Department (SWNPHD) and across Nebraska. Last week was the first time new cases dropped below 100 in SWNPHD since early October last year. The decrease in cases, while still high, comes as a relief to public health workers and the hospitals and clinics who have been under a heavy burden since the fall wave began.

With the drop in hospital capacity being used for COVID patients, the governor has moved the state into the green zone for the Directed Health Measures. This means a change from restrictions on gatherings and other requirements to recommendations that are still in place. The new DHMs also have additional information on who is required to quarantine after close contact with a positive case of COVID-19, with exceptions for those who have been positive in the last 90 days or have been fully vaccinated. SWNPHD continues to recommend taking precautions when out in public and avoiding the 3 C's: crowded places, close contact, and closed spaces.

Public health officials are monitoring the spread of viruses that are a variation of COVID-19, in particular variations from the UK, South Africa, and Brazil. These COVID variants have been found in the US and are expected to cause increased cases and outbreaks. This is one of the reasons for continuing to practice precautions and reduce the spread of germs. Cases of the UK variant are doubling in the US each week, according to the amount of this strain found by genetic sequencing of samples. The South African variant has been found on the east coast, likely related to the sharp increase in cases in South Carolina.

Individuals interested in getting the COVID vaccine may register at swhealth.ne.gov/featured/1. The state has rolled out part of their vaccine registration system, which allows people to sign up but not schedule an appointment yet. SWNPHD is still making appointments from the current waiting list and rolling out vaccine as quickly as it is received. Together with the hospitals they have administered **2,313** COVID-19 vaccinations, which represents approximately **6.05%** of the health district.

SWNPHD had 71 new cases of COVID-19 reported January 26th to February 1st. A breakout by county includes: Chase – 5; Dundy – 10; Frontier – 0; Furnas – 23; Hayes – 0; Hitchcock – 6; Keith – 6; Perkins – 0; Red Willow – 21. This brings the totals for the health district to 3557 cases. SWNPHD has not received confirmation of any additional deaths due to Covid-19. A breakout of total cases by county is available on SWNPHD's website.

COVID-19 information can be found at dhhs.ne.gov and at 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.

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