

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

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South Heartland COVID-19 risk remains elevated; urging action to reverse the trend

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 remained at 2.7, continuing at “elevated” risk (orange).

For the week ending October 31, SHDHD’s test positivity for COVID-19 was 16.3% and the three-week rolling average was 15% positivity. Fifteen percent or higher is indicative of severe community spread and low community spread would be a positivity (percent positive tests) below five percent. South Heartland’s average number of daily new cases for the 14 days ending October 31 was 63.1 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 are eleven school districts in Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster counties affected by COVID-19 as of Wednesday. Overall, there were nearly 200 students and staff out from PreK-12 schools including thirty-eight (38) individuals (27 students, 11 staff) in isolation due to testing positive for COVID-19. “The schools continue to do a good job assuring COVID prevention practices are in place to protect their staff and the students,” she said. “We encourage school families and community members to follow their example.”

In addition, Bever said there are nine 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 evening, there were ten (10) patients being cared for in South Heartland hospitals due to COVID-19, including two (2) requiring critical care. Counting only residents from Adams, Clay, Nuckolls and Webster Counties who have been hospitalized either within the health district area or elsewhere, seventy-five (75) have needed hospital care since the beginning of the pandemic. “On September 15, the cumulative hospitalizations totaled thirty-one (31) for the previous six months (March 15 – September 15). The rate of hospitalization has been accelerating, with forty-four (44) South Heartland residents needing hospitalizations due to COVID-19 in the past month and a half,” Bever said.

Bever reminded residents to maintain six feet of distance from people they don’t live with, to mask up to reduce risk of close contact exposures, and to wash their hands frequently. “If hospitals are caring for patients with severe symptoms of COVID-19 or influenza, they have less capacity to care for any of us or our loved ones when we have other critical needs, like heart attacks,” she said. “We can all help reduce this burden by avoiding the three Cs: avoid Crowded places, avoid Close Contact and avoid Confined spaces,” she said.

“We protected our hospitals earlier this year by reducing our social interactions, which helped keep the spread of the virus in check. It is up to each of us to take actions to turn this trend around – to help keep our schools open, to keep the workforce healthy so our businesses may thrive, to keep our loved ones - young and old - and their caregivers healthy, and to assure our hospitals are able to serve all of our emerging health needs,” she said.

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>.