

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

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Health director: SHDHD Risk Dial drops to 1.7 in moderate risk; avoiding 3Cs still important

Hastings, Neb – On Wednesday evening, South Heartland District Health Department (SHDHD) executive director Michele Bever reported the COVID-19 risk dial score fell to 1.7 in moderate risk, down from 1.8 the previous week. Bever shared trends in daily new cases, weekly positivity, and hospital capacity.

“We saw a 62% net decrease in weekly cases last week compared to the week before. The average number of positive tests reported each day decreased to 2.4 per day, down from 6.4 per day the previous week,” Bever said. “We also saw a drop in weekly positivity in the general population, from 15.7% to 7.6%, and a drop from 5.9% to 2.2% in total weekly positivity, which includes test results from the general population plus test results from long-term care required testing of residents and staff,” she said.

However, after eight straight days with only one COVID-19 patient hospitalized on any single day in South Heartland hospitals, SHDHD’s hospital data dashboard for March 24 showed an increase to four patients needing hospital care due to complications of COVID-19. Eleven percent of inpatients were COVID-positive in South Heartland hospitals and 73% of ICU beds were available for patients.

Vaccination progress in the health district contributes to decreased risk. “SHDHD and vaccine provider partners have administered nearly 13,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccine in the health district as of March 24. This includes 8,204 primary doses, 4,403 booster doses and 306 single dose vaccines,” Bever said. According to SHDHD, these totals do not include the doses provided to long term care facilities through the federal pharmacy program or the doses administered by retail pharmacies through a separate federal pharmacy program.

Bever said the district is still in moderate risk for spread of COVID-19 and encouraged residents, especially those age 50 to 64 and older to sign up for the COVID-19 vaccine. “We are asking vaccine providers in our district to take a reverse age approach when scheduling, with higher priority for those who are most at risk for severe illness due to age and underlying health conditions,” she said.

Bever encouraged everyone in the eligible age groups to register for a COVID vaccine by clicking on the red ribbon at the top of the SHDHD website home page at southheartlandhealth.org. Next, click on the picture of the vaccine to start your vaccine registration in the Nebraska vaccine registration and administration (VRAS) system.

“Anyone who has registered for the COVID-19 vaccine, but who has not yet received a call or email for next steps, may contact their health care provider to schedule an appointment, or may contact the health department at 402-462-6211. We will help schedule you with an approved COVID-vaccine provider. Some vaccines require two doses for individuals to be considered fully vaccinated, so we encourage residents to get their second dose when it is due.”

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recently released [recommendations for fully vaccinated people](#). Those fully vaccinated may visit with other fully vaccinated people indoors without wearing masks or physical distancing. They may also visit with unvaccinated people from a single household who are at low risk for severe COVID-19 disease without wearing masks/face coverings or physical distancing. However, CDC recommends fully vaccinated people should continue to take precautions in public like wearing masks and physical distancing. “Avoiding the three Cs still applies. Avoid crowded places, close contact, and confined spaces,” Bever said.

SHDHD’s [COVID-19 Vaccine Dashboard](#) tracks progress on COVID-19 vaccinations in the four-county district. Other vaccine information and updates, along with links to the Nebraska COVID-19 Vaccination Plan and vaccine priority recommendations, are available on SHDHD’s [COVID-19 vaccine webpage](#). 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>.