



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Illinois Department of Public Health takes over contact tracing

Rock Island County Health Department has worked diligently to keep the community informed throughout the pandemic. We understand that some community members might like more information or to see specific data, but with a small number of staff and continuation of other programs, we have had to maintain a balance. Overall, the department's staff worked to protect the public's health during the most difficult of circumstances. Our role is to help provide resources, reliable information, focus efforts on the prevention of illness, and prepare for emergencies. We are proud of our staff's efforts and the community partnerships we have forged during the pandemic. We will continue to serve the public in promoting prevention efforts, but individuals must take personal responsibility to ensure the community's safety.

Vaccination remains our best tool to end the pandemic, but only about 60% of Rock Island County residents 5 and older are fully vaccinated. As a result, our case counts have risen to all-time highs. Health departments throughout Illinois, including RICHD, do not have enough staff to address all calls that will be coming in from the community during this most recent surge. All county health departments and hospitals in the state are overwhelmed. As a result, the Illinois Department of Public Health, or IDPH, determined that centralizing contact tracing is the best move to help address the high volume of cases for all local health departments.

We share this public message now because the Rock Island County Health Department will have a more limited role in contact tracing going forward. As of Jan. 13, all COVID-19 patients will receive an automated telephone or text message informing them of isolation or quarantine information. All cases will be sent to the IDPH Surge Center to help automate the information provided so individuals have quick access to the best public health guidance. Other states, including Iowa, have used a similar process to help reduce call volumes for the local health departments and to disseminate information as quickly as possible to positive patients.

All productive societies require some personal responsibility from its members. If you test positive, you should share your information regarding your symptoms, positive tests, or exposure with your worksite, family, friends, and others that you care about before or after gathering. Although we have helped guide the community through recommendations and best practices, individuals now generally should know what to do and when to do it. The most up-to-date isolation and quarantine information is included at the bottom of this message.

Moving forward, if you need letters for release from work you will need to request them from the state's automated system. If you don't participate in the assessments offered, it will not generate release letters. RICHD cannot issue release letters because this process is part of the centralized contact tracing efforts. The state's surge center will take over all calls, but if you don't get a call, you still must follow isolation and quarantine rules. Please follow

recommendations below to protect yourself and others. For the health of our healthcare workers and everyone in the community, COVID-positive patients must stay home. Those who take home tests also must follow isolation and quarantine rules to keep all of us as safe as possible. We all have the tools to prevent severe illness: vaccination, boosters, masking, social distancing, handwashing, disinfection, and isolating when you are sick.

We will continue to provide links on Facebook and our website with timely information that will help guide actions that are needed. This information might continue to change, so please ensure you are following the most up-to-date recommendations. The vaccine is available widely to help reduce severe illness and death. It is up to you to protect yourself, your family and your community. We will continue to provide all immunizations. We offer the Moderna and Johnson & Johnson vaccines on Tuesdays and the Pfizer vaccines on Fridays. Hours for both days are 9 a.m. to noon and 1-4 p.m. Pediatric Pfizer clinics are on Fridays. Links for appointments are posted on RICHD's Facebook page at 10 a.m. Wednesdays. You can find other providers at vaccines.gov.

RICHD staff members will continue to address calls and concerns, but the IDPH Surge Center is not staffed by Rock Island County Health Department employees. Please understand that our staff will continue to do all that we can to represent Rock Island County and to address your calls and concerns as we hear from you. We care deeply for this community. Please help us protect the public's health.

As of Jan. 12, this is the CDC isolation and quarantine guidance for the general public:

Isolation after a positive test, regardless of vaccination status

- Stay away from everyone for five days. Day 0 is the day you feel symptoms or your test date if you don't feel symptoms (could include fever, chills, sore throat, cough, shortness of breath, body aches, loss of taste and smell).
- After five days if you have not had any fever for the last 24 hours and your symptoms are getting better, you can leave isolation.
- You must continue to wear your mask strictly for the next five days.

Quarantine after a close contact

If you come into close contact with someone with COVID-19, you should quarantine if you are in one of the following groups:

- You are ages 18 or older and completed the [primary series](#) of recommended vaccine, but have not received a [recommended](#) booster shot when eligible.
- You received the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccine (completing the primary series) over 2 months ago and have not received a [recommended](#) booster shot.
- You are not vaccinated or have not completed a [primary vaccine series](#).

Vaccinated and boosted close contacts:

- Do not need to quarantine.
- Should seek testing on Day 5, and if the test is positive, should isolate with the above guidance.
- Should wear a mask for 10 days after the exposure.

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