

**COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE**  
Inter-Office Communication

Date: December 28, 2022

To: Marcelia Nicholson, Chairwoman, Milwaukee County Board of Supervisors

From: The Office of the County Executive

Subject: Report from the Office of the County Executive, providing information on current COVID-19 mitigation procedures, and the actions Milwaukee County is continuing to take to ensure it keeps its workforce and the people they serve safe.

File Type: Informational

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**BACKGROUND**

Throughout the pandemic, the goal of Milwaukee County's COVID-19 pandemic management process has been to continue County government operations and critical services for its residents, while keeping its staff and participants, as well as the wider community, safe. Milwaukee County government has many public-facing operations, often interacts with particularly vulnerable individuals, and is responsible for several of the largest congregate facilities in the county.

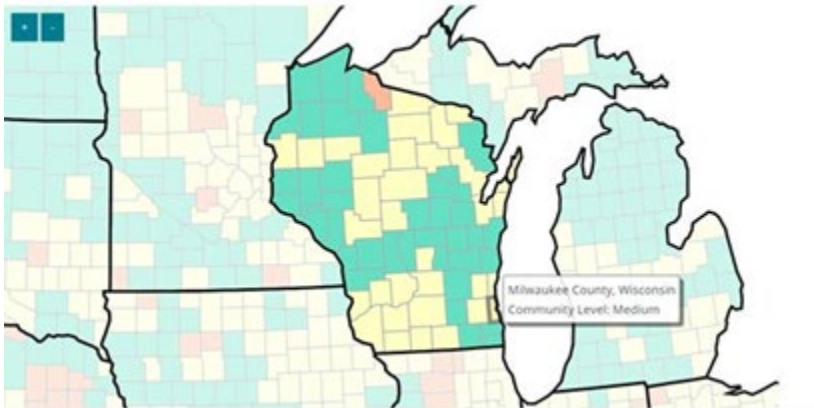
A comprehensive mitigation strategy is crucial to ensuring that Milwaukee County government can continue providing the critical services upon which many of our residents depend, while keeping employees and those service users as safe as possible from COVID-19.

The foundation of Milwaukee County's COVID-19 mitigation process is the CDC COVID-19 Community Level framework. This framework, released in late February 2022, classifies community risk into three levels - Low, Medium, and High. The CDC uses the combination of the three metrics referenced below to determine the COVID-19 community level.

- COVID-19 Cases per 100/k Residents
- COVID-19 Hospital Admissions per 100/k Residents
- COVID-19 Inpatient Bed Utilization

New COVID-19 admissions and the percent of staffed inpatient beds occupied represent the current potential for strain on the health system. Data on new cases acts as an early warning indicator of potential increases in health system strain in the event of a COVID-19 surge.

## CURRENT STATE



As of Thursday, December 8, 2022, the CDC continues to classify Milwaukee County's COVID-19 community risk level as "**medium**". The County moved to "medium" on October 13, 2022, when the hospital admittance rate exceeded 10 per 100,000 residents.

The table below indicates the County's most current data published by the CDC on December 8, 2022. The number of cases increased by approximately 38% over the previous week, but with the prevalence of home testing, the number of positive cases is likely much higher. The number of admissions decreased slightly from 12.7 per 100,000 residents to 12.4 per 100,000 residents. Inpatient bed utilization has increased approximately 16% over the previous week from 4.7% to 5.6%. The results of these measures indicate the continued significant prevalence of COVID-19 in our community.

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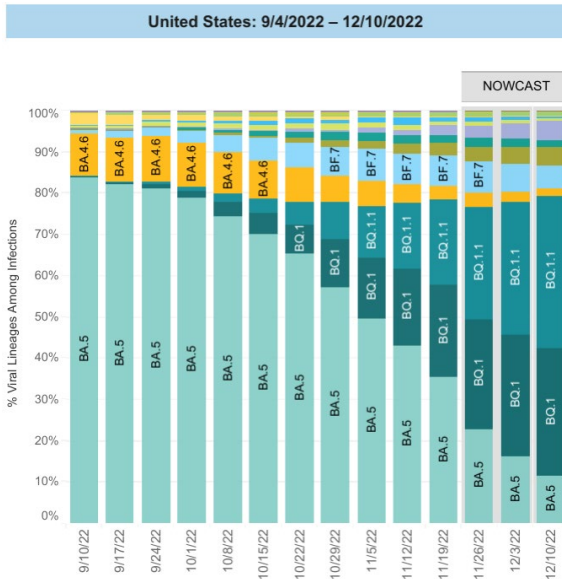
Case Rate per 100,000 population	167.07
New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population	12.4
% Staffed inpatient beds in use by patients with confirmed COVID-19	5.6%

The most likely scenario for Milwaukee County's risk classification to return to "high" is continued increases in the number of cases. The current case rate is 167.07 per 100,000 residents. If the number of cases continue to increase at the current rate Milwaukee County will exceed 200 cases per 100,000 residents in the next week or two. A per-capita case rate above 200 will move Milwaukee County back to the "high" risk level.

While the CDC Community Risk levels only use the three measures listed above to determine the level of risk, other measures can also be useful in assessing the level of COVID-19 risk in Milwaukee County. For example, the percentage of positive tests may provide a more accurate assessment than just reviewing the case rate. On December 6, 2022, the percentage of positive tests exceeded 10% for the first time since September. It currently stands at a seven-day average rate of 10.5%.

Another key metric is the level of COVID-19 indicated in wastewater. Monitoring COVID in wastewater can be an early indicator of increases or decreases in the levels of COVID in the community. As of November 27, the 14-day average of Million Gene Copies (MGC) indicated in the Jones Island sewershed is 71.67 and 65.70 in the South Shore sewershed. Overall, this metric has been increasing since October.

The public health community is closely monitoring COVID-19 variants. After many months of primarily BA.4 and BA.5, BQ.1 and BQ.1.1 are now represent most cases in Milwaukee County and in the United States. The figure below indicates the percentage of COVID-19 cases in the United States attributed to each variant as of December 10, 2022. The impact of these variants is yet to be determined.



## **CURRENT MITIGATION STEPS**

### **Masking**

Moving to the “medium” risk level required an update to the County’s masking guidelines. Because of the increased risk to County employees and the potentially vulnerable people they serve, and under the advisement of Dr. Weston, masking returned to many public areas of Milwaukee County facilities including the Courthouse and Milwaukee County Transit System buses. A link to the masking guidelines table is pasted below:

[FaceMaskPolicySummaryTable \(milwaukee.gov\)](https://www.milwaukee.gov/FaceMaskPolicySummaryTable)

### **Capacity**

Capacity guidelines are at “medium” status. The capacity guidelines format was significantly revised in May and is now more closely aligned with the CDC Community Risk Levels. Listed below are the current “high” classification guidelines:

- Telework encouraged where possible
- Limit in-person meetings
- Provide appropriate spacing options
- Ensure the availability of high-quality masks
- Maintain improved ventilation throughout public and private indoor spaces when possible
- Consider in-person participant vulnerability

## **OTHER UPDATES**

The COVID-19 Workgroup developed and communicated updated attendance accountability guidelines for leaders. These guidelines ensure employees absent due to a verified COVID-19 case are not unduly penalized for being absent.

Three Dr. Weston videos encouraging employees to obtain the booster vaccine were posted to County Connect. The videos can be viewed [here](#).

The COVID-19 Workgroup will continue to provide ongoing informational and educational COVID-19 information to help employees keep themselves, the people they serve, and their families safe. This will become especially important as employees and the community in general begin to spend more time indoors gathering with family and friends during the holiday season.

### **NEXT STEPS**

The COVID-19 Workgroup will continue to monitor the COVID-19 data, and under the advisement of Dr. Weston, take the appropriate steps continue to keep Milwaukee County employees, and the people they serve, safe.

### **ALIGNMENT TO STRATEGIC PLAN**

Mitigating the spread of COVID-19, and thus preventing further death and long-term negative health effects, is one of the most meaningful steps that Milwaukee County government can take in service of our Vision to become the healthiest county in Wisconsin. While we must still address the disparities and negative health outcomes that are the result of decades of policy choices, COVID-19 is a clear and present danger to the health and well-being of our constituents and employees. This framework not only works to address the health aspects of our strategic plan, but also ensures that Milwaukee County is able to continue the work that our departments are undertaking to advance our strategic plan and work towards our Vision by providing critical services to our residents.

### **FISCAL EFFECT**

Fiscal Note Not Required

### **TERMS**

N/A

### **VIRTUAL MEETING INVITES**

- [kyle.caudill@milwaukeecountywi.gov](mailto:kyle.caudill@milwaukeecountywi.gov)
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### **PREPARED BY:**

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### **ATTACHMENTS:**

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