

COUNTY OF MILWAUKEE
Inter-Office Communication

Date: August 8, 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

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.

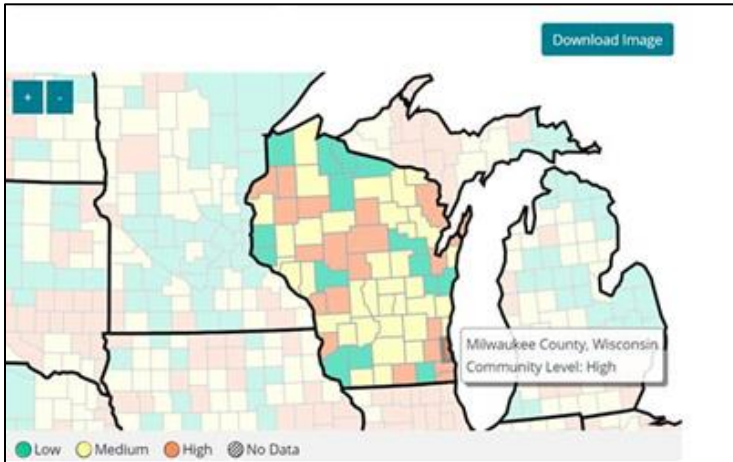
A comprehensive mitigation strategy is crucial to ensuring that Milwaukee County government can continue providing the critical services upon which many of our residents depend, while keeping employees and those service users as safe as possible from COVID-19.

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, August 4, 2022, the CDC continues to classify Milwaukee County's COVID-19 community risk level as **"high"**. The County moved to "high" on May 19, 2022, when its hospital admittance rate per 100,000 residents exceeded 10.

The table below indicates the County's most current data published by the CDC on August 4, 2022. The number of cases decreased by 8.5% over the week, but with the prevalence of home testing, the number of positive cases is likely much higher. The number of admissions has

consistently remained above 10 per 100,000 residents for 12 weeks. It did increase slightly, by 0.3 over the previous week. Inpatient bed utilization indicated a slight increase over the previous week. It has remained steady or with incremental increases since April 14. The results of these measures indicate the significant prevalence of COVID-19 in our community.

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| Case Rate per 100,000 population | 245.42 |
| New COVID-19 admissions per 100,000 population | 14.5 |
| % Staffed inpatient beds in use by patients with confirmed COVID-19 | 4.5% |

There are currently two ways Milwaukee County's risk classification could return to medium.

1. The case rate falls below 200 per 100,000 residents
2. New hospital admissions fall below 10 per 100,000 residents.

There's no indication that either of these metrics will move Milwaukee County into the Medium risk classification or lower any time soon.

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. The percentage of positive tests continues to remain above 10% and has consistently been above 16% for weeks. Apart from the Omicron surge in December and January, these levels are some of the highest positive test rates during the pandemic.

Another key metric is the level of COVID-19 indicated in wastewater. Monitoring COVID in wastewater can be an early indicator of increases or decrease of the levels of COVID in the community. As of August 3, the level of COVID indicated in the Jones Island sewershed is 26.5 per 100,000 residents. This is slightly lower than the previous weekly averages and may indicate the beginning of a favorable trend.

CURRENT MITIGATION STEPS

Masking

Moving to the "high" 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 and non-public areas of Milwaukee County facilities. A link to the masking guidelines table is pasted below:

[FaceMaskPolicySummaryTable_HighRiskLevel.pdf \(milwaukee.gov\)](#)

Capacity

Capacity guidelines also remain at “high” 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 required where possible
- Provide the ability for six feet of distancing per person
- Ensure the availability of high-quality masks**
- In-person employees complete COVID-19 screening survey on County Connect
- Avoid non-essential indoor activities
- Maintain improved ventilation throughout public and private indoor spaces when possible
 - Open windows and doors when possible
- Consider in-person participant vulnerability

OTHER UPDATES

The COVID-19 workgroup is partnering with communications and marketing to implement a recognition program. Employees at all levels will be encouraged to nominate an individual, or group of individuals who have done an outstanding job protecting our employees, and the people we serve. The “COVID HEROES” campaign is expected to launch in August. Nominees will be showcased in the weekly “What’s Up” newsletter and on County Connect.

The COVID-19 Workgroup is in the process of updating Milwaukee County’s COVID-19 procedure documents. Updates include the addition of the Novavax vaccine as an approved vaccine for the Vaccine Mandate procedure, as well as a review of the County’s current isolation and exposure guidelines among other updates.

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 students begin to return to classrooms, and as employees and the community in general begins to spend more time indoors as summer turns to autumn.

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

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