



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
**ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER**  
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*FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*

ITASCA COUNTY SHOWING SIGNS OF STRENGTH AMID CHALLENGES

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **September 24, 2020**) – Itasca County is a place of contrasts today as fall colors and exceptional weather have drawn families outdoors for safe, fall fun at the same time the county is seeing growing COVID cases and another death.

As of noon Sept. 24, laboratory-confirmed cases among county residents stand at 312, with 19 more since Monday, Sept. 21, and 49 more since Thursday, Sept. 17. The most current (as of Sept. 21) 14-day average of positive tests per 10,000 Itasca residents is 16.8. Half of infections are coming from community spread.

Itasca County's fourteenth death due to COVID occurred last week, a man in his 80s. No further information will be provided by the county in order to protect privacy.

Also announced this week, rising community spread of COVID has prompted three local school districts (ISD318 – Bigfork and Grand Rapids, ISD316 – Greenway and ISD319- Nashwauk/Keewatin) to shift to models that limit the number of older students physically in schools at one time. ISD317 (Deer River) and other districts west of Itasca County already were employing hybrid or online-only models.

“Our hearts break with the family and friends of our newly deceased neighbor,” said Kelly Chandler, department director, Itasca County Public Health. “This has been a tough week for our county. At the same time, we can see strength, resilience and generosity.

“Thanks to community sewers, another 4,000 cloth masks were delivered to area schools through the MaskUpItasca Back to School mask drive supported by ElderCircle, bringing the total to 8,000.

“The number of volunteers, especially the Search and Rescue team, who made our free testing event possible this week was inspiring. More than 900 people took time to get tested, which will provide both individuals and the county information we need to make data-driven choices.

“And the flexibility being shown by our schools and our families to make safe choices and absorb changes in learning models gives me great hope that we have strength and resilience to get through this.



“We do have quite a way to go on this journey. Kindness and grace are needed right now, especially for those on the front lines for our community.”

Itasca residents with questions or concerns may leave them at the Itasca County COVID message line, with calls returned 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday – Friday. The Itasca COVID line number is 218-327-6784.

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*Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Thursdays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. The next briefing will be Oct. 1. Recordings available. Contact [anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us) for more information.*

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and [Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us)) or Anna Anttila ([anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us](mailto:anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us)).



Among the many local hands creating 8,000 masks for Itasca area students were those of youth at the Itasca County Family YMCA, who rolled up their sleeves for tie-dying. Photo credit: Itasca County Family YMCA