



ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

ITASCA RESOURCE CENTER

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR KIDS, DESPITE COVID-19

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **June 11, 2020**) – Itasca County has lost another female resident in her 80s to COVID-19, bringing deaths to 12. As the community continues to carefully reopen, it also grieves those lost and cares for those infected.

As of Noon on June 11, Itasca County has recorded 67 laboratory confirmed positive tests of COVID-19. Deeper county analysis finds that nine of these positive tests were of persons who tested two or more times and were positive on more than one subsequent test. The total number of Itasca residents who have tested positive to date is 58. Itasca County has seen no new positive laboratory confirmed cases since last reported on June 8.

This week, Minnesota enters Phase 3 of its Stay Safe Minnesota plan. Summer weather and increased opportunities provide families and care givers with more opportunities for their children, especially here in Itasca County where we have many natural resources and excellent programs.

More than 100 stakeholders in the Itasca County COVID Response Network have been meeting weekly since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis. Many are providers of services to families and youth who have adapted programs and services as conditions change.

For example, many of the area's private childcare providers have taken on extra expenses and made very significant modifications to meet the needs of families of essential workers like themselves.

“Like other workers, the pandemic has been very stressful for private childcare providers,” said Rita Craiglow, who has owned and operated It’s a Small World Child Care in Grand Rapids for nearly 30 years. “State guidelines that keep changing and often are confusing, enrollments and income down to nothing, cost of food skyrocketing. Community support, including from other providers, has made all the difference. And I do see things starting to turn around. We are strong and connected and can count on our friends, family and the community.”



“I don’t know how kids are processing this stuff, though. It’s different than it is for adults, a lot of times coming out sideways. Childcare providers have been dealing with kids acting up or really withdrawn, depending on what their family situation is. Community resources have been really important in helping children deal with different emotions, as well as our own.”

“For older children, out-of-school programs are especially important this summer. They bring a wide range of benefits to youth, families and communities,” said Chandler. “These programs can boost academic performance, reduce risky behaviors, promote physical health, and provide a safe, structured environment for children.

“Some Itasca-area youth sports teams are restarting practices, the Itasca Family YMCA will be reopening, Community Education has curated summer opportunities, local churches have found new ways to engage kids, libraries are always a wealth of activities. Scouts, 4H, fishing adventures, golfing—the outdoors gives Itasca residents extra opportunities to get back to the things we love. Being a tourist in our own backyards, exploring what others travel here to experience, so many options.

“Our kids have been out of their routines now for 12 weeks, with more to come. As we all are finding our way through uncertainty and unrest, we can still be investing time and attention in our children. The pandemic calls on us to stay close to our kids, to keep them safe as well as to check on their wellbeing.

“Itasca County wants to successfully navigate this crisis and get our economy back and humming. We also want to do what we can so that we are stronger on the other side of it. There are great resources out there as we think about those who history may tell us have been impacted most, our children. Good health and habits are important for young people as it sets the stage for well-being in later life. This time will shape who they become as workers, parents and leaders.”

The nonprofit Child Mind Institute offers this guidance:

- “Remain calm. Remember that children will react to both what you say and how you say it. They will pick up cues from the conversations you have with them and with others.
- [Reassure children](#) that they are safe. Let them know it is okay if they feel upset. Share with them how you deal with your own stress so that they can learn how to cope from you.
- Make yourself available to listen and to talk. Let children know they can come to you when they have questions.
- Avoid language that might blame others and [lead to stigma](#).
- Pay attention to what children see or hear on television, radio, or online. Consider reducing the amount of screen time focused on COVID-19. Too much information on one topic can lead to anxiety.
- [Provide information that is truthful and appropriate](#) for the age and developmental level of the child. Talk to children about how some stories on COVID-19 on the Internet and social media may be based on rumors and inaccurate information. Children may



misinterpret what they hear and can be frightened about something they do not understand.

- [Teach children everyday actions](#) to reduce the spread of germs. Remind children to wash their hands frequently and stay away from people who are coughing or sneezing or sick. Also, remind them to cough or sneeze into a tissue or their elbow, then throw the tissue into the trash.
- If school is open, discuss any new actions that may be taken at school to help [protect children and school staff.](#)”

Children’s Minnesota also recognizes that children with underlying medical conditions may have additional concerns or worries. They may have more awareness or feel more vulnerable. They suggest:

“Reassure your children they already know a lot of these safe skills. Remind them:

- You have been practicing these skills of good hand washing and paying attention to germs. You already know how germs are spread and how they can affect our bodies.
- You are aware and conscientious of your body and what it needs.
- It’s good that other people are practicing these skills of hand washing and sanitizing.

You may also notice a change in your child’s behaviors:

- Sleep disturbance.
- Eating changes.
- Fixated on a specific behavior such as constantly wanting to wash hands or not wanting to go outside to play.
- Worrying about themselves and others.

Reassure your child that you are making the best decisions to protect them and protect others.

Try to keep some normalcy and routine as best as you can. Remember that you may make different decisions from one day to the next based on the changing information.”

Itasca County’s Message Center is available for those with COVID-related issues and needs at 218-327-6784. Response calls will be made between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

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Helpful resources:



Dr. Jan Rourke, pediatrician, Grand Itasca Clinic & Hospital, on mental health and children (video): <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=176583097126636>

Itasca Area Community Education: www.GetLearning.org

Itasca County 4-H: <https://local.extension.umn.edu/local/itasca/4-h>

Invest Early: www.investearly.org

Itasca Family YMCA: www.ymcaitasca.org

Area Attractions and Activities: <https://visitgrandrapids.com/fun-free-things-with-kids/>

Edge of the Wilderness Discovery Center: <https://edgeofthewilderness.com/activities-northern-minnesota/attractions-activities.html>

Iron Range attractions: <https://ironrange.org/attractions/>

Field Guide and Journal – Leech Lake Band of Ojibwe:
<http://www.llojibwe.org/drm/fieldguide.html>

Oxford University - Tools for speaking with children about Coronavirus:
<https://vimeo.com/421258727>

CDC: Helping children cope in emergencies: <https://www.cdc.gov/childrenindisasters/helping-children-cope.html>

[Playground Guidance for Schools and Child Care Programs](#) (Minnesota Department of Health)

[Decision Tree for People with COVID-19 Symptoms in Youth, Student, and Child Care Programs](#) (MDH)

Exclusion guidance for youth, student, and child care programs.

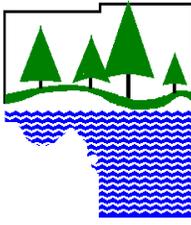
[Public Swimming Pool and Aquatic Facilities](#) (MDH)

Guidance for the reopening of swimming pools used for youth sports and recreational activities, as described in [EO 20-63](#).

[Minnesota Summer Programming Guidance for Schools](#) (MDE)

This guidance can be found under the “Guidance for Districts and Schools” section of this webpage.

[Organized Youth Sports FAQs](#) (MDH)



Note to media: Itasca County Health Department will host 30-minute press briefings on Fridays at 10:00 a.m. as needed. There will be no briefing on July 3. Recordings available. Contact anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us for more information.

Media Contacts

Please contact each organization individually or Itasca County staff: Kelly Chandler (218-327-6144 and Kelly.chandler@co.itasca.mn.us) or Anna Anttila (anna.anttila@co.itasca.mn.us).