



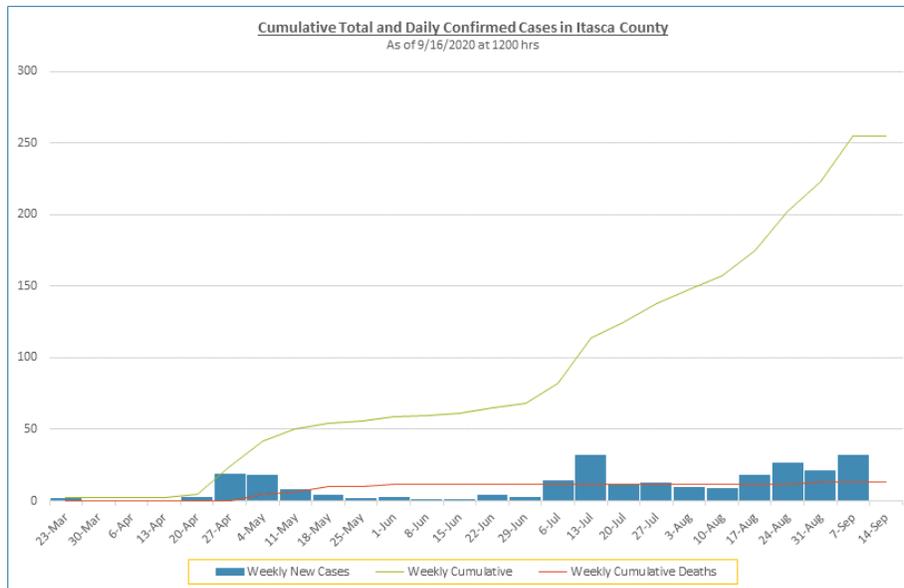
ITASCA COUNTY HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

ITASCA COUNTY CONTINUES TO SEE COMMUNITY SPREAD OF COVID

(Grand Rapids, Minn., **September 22, 2020**) – As with communities across Minnesota, Itasca County continues to see broad and sustained spread of COVID-19 among residents. As of noon Monday, Sept. 21, the cumulative total of Itasca residents with laboratory-confirmed cases is 293, an increase of 30 over the weekend (since Sept. 17) and 44 over the past seven days (since Sept. 14).



Source: Minnesota Department of Health, 9.17.2020

Approximately 50 percent of all Itasca County cases can be attributed to “community spread” and not tied to congregate settings and other identifiable outbreaks, said Kelly Chandler, Itasca County Public Health department manager. Twenty percent of all positive cases have not exhibited symptoms, also known as “asymptomatic.”

“Persons who are asymptomatic still are infectious and can and do spread COVID to others,” said Chandler. “And with the proportion of cases coming through unpredictable community spread, we need to assume that COVID is anywhere and everywhere. Wearing face coverings,



physical distancing and avoiding crowds is as important as ever—even up here in the northland.”

To better understand how much COVID-19 is currently circulating in Minnesota communities, free testing events will be hosted by the State of Minnesota and partners throughout the state over the next four weeks.

Itasca County agencies will host drive-through testing on Wednesday, Sept. 23, 10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. at the Itasca County Fairgrounds. Minnesota National Guard will assist and test processing will be provided by Mayo Clinic and University of Minnesota. Pre-registration is encouraged, but not necessary, to limit wait times at <https://www.primarybio.com/r/itasca> or by calling 1-855-612-0677.

A non-invasive swab of the outer nasal passages will be taken during the test, with results available in 2–3 days. Tests are available to any persons who believe they have reason to be tested, whether or not they currently have symptoms. This testing is free and insurance is not necessary.

“In order to interrupt unpredictable community spread, especially knowing that many positive residents don’t realize they carry the virus, it is essential that we better understand how it’s traveling in our county,” said Chandler. “That’s why this type of testing, plus other surveying, is happening here. It’s so we can keep our businesses open, our schools with options, and our families and neighbors safe.”

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.

-END-

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 for more information.

Itasca County Public Health media contacts

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