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City-Cowley County
Health Department

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 10, 2021

County Wide COVID-19 Update

The City-Cowley County Health Department monitors the health of county residents. The following is a weekly update to inform the community of the current status of the COVID-19 pandemic in Cowley County.

During the past week we have been closely watching new infections to see if there is a discernable increase in illness connected to the Labor Day weekend. A noticeable spike in new cases appears on September 7, 2021 but it is due to the delay in processing lab information over the weekend. Case rates are staying stable at this time.

Local school districts are continuing to experience the effects of viral spread. All districts report larger than normal absence rates due to the need to quarantine students that are exposed in classrooms. The Health Department is working with the districts to help find solutions that include testing prior to return to the classrooms. The health and safety of the children in our community is our highest priority, we want them to be in school in person to benefit from classroom learning, we all must work together to make sure that the school year is successful. Please do not send a sick child to school and if anyone in the family becomes ill remember that every family member **MUST** quarantine if they are not vaccinated or have natural immunity from a previously documented case of COVID-19.

It should also be mentioned that the same caution must be taken if you have a child in daycare.

The Health Department continues to offer rapid antigen testing in our daily drive-up lane. The antigen test detects proteins from the virus that causes COVID-19 which are present in the respiratory system. Test results are generally available within 15 minutes following sample processing. Results of the tests are transmitted to people through a text message or an email. These tests are quick and a good tool to identify people with illness. We will also continue to offer PCR testing which is more sensitive and definitive in confirming the presence of COVID-19. If you have illness symptoms and need testing please call the office and we will provide you details for when the testing lane will be open each day.

Next week we will continue to offer testing and vaccination services on site at the Walnut Valley Festival. This past week we have been pleased that many campers have come by to test or be vaccinated. They have all been thankful that we are present at the event. We are also providing

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masks for individuals and hand sanitizer for use. We are applying our best efforts as a way to help keep everyone in the community, either resident or visitor safe and healthy.

There will be more and more large-scale events occurring in the weeks ahead. We began with high school and college football games and are moving into festivals and community celebrations. These types of events are happening statewide. Each of these events are vital to our communities. They provide a sense of community, personal identity, and emotional release for many. You may be excited about what is occurring, or you may choose to not attend, we understand those perspectives and encourage you to make your best decision to attend or avoid these events. Please remember to respect each other and be kind. Provide space between your group and others, and please if you are ill do not attend any public event.

Testing rates in Cowley County for COVID-19 remain steady with 100 to 150 tests being performed each day. On average 10 to 15 new cases are identified each day. This rate has remained level for the past four (4) weeks. We continue to average approximately 100 active cases daily in the county. Our crude infection rate based on testing is 10% -15%.

A comparison of the overall rates of infection in the non-vaccinated and vaccinated populations (see table below) illustrates the significant trend in illness spread.

Since March 31, 2021	Number of Cases	Percent of total
All cases	957	100%
Vaccinated (break through)	86	9.0%
Non-Vaccinated	871	91.0%

Month to month new case information is presented numerically in the table below:

Month/Year	New Cases
April 2021	47
May 2021	56
June 2021	28
July 2021	153
August 2021	488
September 2021* to date	185

No additional deaths have occurred this week, to date 117 Cowley County residents have died from complications related to COVID-19 infection.

Cowley County, along with all counties in Kansas, remains identified as an area where infection is currently widespread. The Kansas Department of Health and Environment has updated their reporting of the ongoing pandemic for the state and individual counties including weekly county

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rankings. You can visit their website for more data:

<https://www.coronavirus.kdheks.gov/160/COVID-19-in-Kansas> .

The news from Washington, D.C. this week has caused many local people stress. Vaccination mandates are NOT being issued locally by the Public Health Officer. I urge everyone to allow the elected officials to battle ideological issues out. Contact them to voice your personal concerns. Our role will be to continue to provide sound medical advice about vaccination and the local conditions including illness within the County. As the Public Health Officer, I highly endorse the use of vaccine to stop the spread of illness. I will be happy to talk to anyone about their concerns. I will always support their use, but I will always take into consideration the decisions of individuals. Please do not let the noise coming from news and social media deter you or anger you. We are only concerned about the health of our community. Look at what is happening locally and base your decisions about your health, including vaccinations, on those facts.

As long as the pandemic persists Cowley County residents are advised to take all necessary precautions to prevent the contraction and spread of ANY illness.

- Stay home if you feel ill.
- If you develop any symptoms of illness, be tested to determine if you are infected and to seek medical help.
- Wash your hands frequently and use hand sanitizer.
- Wear a mask in enclosed places if required to do so or if you so desire.
- Avoid crowds and large social gatherings if you believe those settings are a risk for you.
- You MUST stay home and isolate from others if you are ill so you will not spread the virus or any other illness to others.
- Please be kind and respectful of others.

The virus does not discriminate and knows no political ideology. It will continue to evolve and seek out a host that is unprotected in order to spread. Current data continues to indicate that if you are not vaccinated your risk of infection with COVID-19 is significantly higher than if you were vaccinated.

We strongly urge you to get vaccinated to protect your health, however:

THE CHOICE IS YOURS, and we respect your decision.

We will update this report on Monday September 20, 2021.

Stay well and enjoy the Walnut Valley Festival.