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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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County Wide COVID-19 Update

The City-Cowley County Health Department continues to monitor the health of our county residents and the ongoing cases of COVID-19 locally. The following is an update to inform the community of the current status of the pandemic in Cowley County.

I would like to thank all of our county residents that have taken action and become vaccinated over the past few weeks and months.

July 2021 has witnessed a 5-fold increase in newly identified COVID-19 cases. One hundred fifty-three (153) people have taken ill this month, four hundred eighty-eight (488) people were tested. The crude infection rate for July now stands at 31% (153/488) of those tested.

Eighteen (18) of the new cases, (12%) are identified as “break-through” cases occurring in people who previously acquired immunity through infection or were properly vaccinated. An examination of the break-through cases indicates that other variables including pre-existing chronic health conditions or the use of medications to treat chronic health conditions may have reduced vaccine efficacy. To date no person locally who has been vaccinated has failed to recover and no one has died because they were vaccinated. In Cowley County the vaccines are continuing to prove that they are highly effective. Absent the vaccinated population I would have expected the already high infection rate for July to be at least twice as high as it currently stands.

One hundred-thirty-five (135) cases have occurred in people who were not vaccinated and have no known immunity. Fifty-one (51) cases remain active as of today. Six (6) people are currently being treated for COVID-19 in local hospitals. Local hospitals report that they have few if any available beds in their facilities dedicated as COVID beds. New cases are being diverted when possible to larger hospital facilities in other communities (Wichita, Topeka, etc.).

Sadly, new reports this week indicate that the virus has returned to local long term care facilities which places elderly residents residing there at risk of infection. One person has died from COVID-19 in July 2021. The total deaths from COVID-19 in Cowley County remain at one-hundred nine (109) which is unchanged from the previous week.

July 2021 COVID-19 activity is officially the highest in terms of new cases since February 2021. As previously reported the COVID-19 variants, most notably the Delta strain, is currently most

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prevalent in the population and is spreading. Clinical evidence shows that the Delta strain creates a much higher viral load in people which in turn leads to its increased transmissibility.

For the sake of comparison here are the monthly numbers for the last 120 days (4 months):

Month/Year	New Cases
April 2021	47
May 2021	56
June 2021	28
July 2021	153

Using the standard national matrix for COVID-19 it is expected that Cowley County will be identified as an area where infection is widespread when the data is published in the next weeks. This reality is the same statewide and not specific to Cowley County. In reality we are seeing exactly what was anticipated, the virus would mutate, and the new variants would infect the population with no immunity at a much higher rate than it would affect people who have acquired some form of natural or vaccine induced immunity.

This week the CDC has published new mask wearing guidance. Calling once more for the population including those who are vaccinated to wear masks once more. Currently that is guidance and not a mandate. The Governor has issued orders for State employees on the job and for visitors in State owned or operated facilities and offices that will require the wearing of masks. This will likely extend to local state offices such as the local drivers licensing office and state court facilities, as such residents should be prepared to wear a mask if you need to conduct business at those facilities in the near future.

Locally there are many outdoor events planned, including the County Fair, which is occurring this weekend. Outdoor venues have not been included in masking requirements to date. While crowds are expected to attend the fair and its activities no restrictions are in place to require face coverings. In my judgement face coverings in summer heat (100 degrees predicted) are not reasonable. It is hoped that all people who attend these events will be aware of their surroundings and take appropriate measures to protect themselves from heat, close contact with others unknown to them, and maintain a high degree of personal hygiene (handwashing) at all times. If you do not feel comfortable or safe you should not attend. The Health Department will monitor our community health status following the fair and report if the event resulted in a higher-than-expected “bump” in transmission of COVID-19.

Making the case to get vaccinated and removing politics from the pandemic is proving more and more difficult. Many people simply will not accept that a virus that they believe was manipulated by humans and as such “experimental” and is infecting people at such a high rate, is a threat to their health. Further it seems some people are having a difficult time accepting that a vaccine developed using decades old technology which was authorized by the FDA to be brought forth

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for use in an expedited manner due to a public health emergency (pandemic) is safe. It has been stated by some that the “experimental vaccine’ will kill you, that is a total falsehood. No one in Cowley County has died as a result of being vaccinated, if that were to happen in a community this size EVERYONE would have heard about it happening and there is no way I would ever not share that information.

As I stated last week COVID-19 will NEVER EVER be gone from earth. It will hang on until we effectively reach a community wide immunity rate high enough to not allow it to spread further. The fact remains that we are witnessing more and more people who are not protected becoming infected. I encourage everyone to consider the evidence right here in Cowley County. In Cowley County no deaths, zero, (0) have been attributed to being vaccinated but 109 deaths have occurred in 4161 cases of COVID-19. That means for every 100 people in the local county that have contracted COVID-19 more than two (2) have died. The numbers simply do not lie. You are at a much lower risk of infection and possible death from COVID-19 if you are vaccinated. THE CHOICE IS YOURS, and while we may not agree, I certainly respect your choice. When you are ready to be vaccinated, we will be here to help you safely accomplish that task.

Finally, the current infection rate is not anticipated to slow. I expect to see additional cases occur. How many remains to be seen. Individuals who experience symptoms of illness are encouraged to take the presentation of symptoms very seriously and are advised to be tested and seek medical attention as soon as possible. Most importantly if you are feeling ill you are reminded that you must isolate from others and to stay home so that you do not spread the illness.

I hope that you all stay well and enjoy the County Fair weekend.

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