

## COVID-19 Report

### COVID Numbers Continue to Climb

As of Wednesday, June 17, 2020, the number of positive cases in Wright County has climbed to 292. No other county in North Central Iowa is anywhere close to our numbers with Hamilton at 129, Webster at 103, Franklin at 50, Cerro Gordo at 49, Humboldt at 34, Hancock at 31, and Kossuth at 20.

In terms of cases per 100,000 population, Wright County ranks in the top ten highest in Iowa.

1. Buena Vista (Storm Lake)	8,061	Rate per 100,000 population
2. Crawford (Denison)	3,631	
3. Louisa (Columbus Junction)	3,178	
4. Woodbury (Sioux City)	2,940	
5. Tama	2,538	
6. Marshall	2,361	
7. Wright	2,301	
8. Wapello (Ottumwa)	1,923	
9. Black Hawk (Waterloo)	1,390	
10. Muscatine	1,335	

### Face Masks are Vital

A recent study published by the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) and released on June 11, 2020, shows that the airborne transmission routes of COVID-19 are highly virulent and dominant for the spread. Face coverings significantly reduce the number of infections and shape the trends of the pandemic.

This is a change in tactics. Previous CDC advice suggested that masks were to protect others. This study by the PNAS shows that wearing a mask is the best protection for each individual. Other mitigation measures, such as social distancing implemented in the United States, are insufficient by themselves in protecting the public.

When school resumes in August, all faculty and staff will be required to wear masks while in our buildings. Reusable masks have been ordered and will be distributed in August.

### Advice of County Medical Expert

Board President McDaniel received an opinion from the leading medical expert in Wright County, Dr. Michael McLoughlin, and wanted me to share it with the entire school board:

“We are continuing to see a significant increase in cases of COVID-19 in Wright County and the surrounding area. An increasing number of these are no longer directly connected to the egg facilities that our local outbreak initially was centered upon. Along with the increase in total cases, we have seen a significant increase in the number of patients with severe illness seeking

care in the emergency room and being hospitalized. I expect that the number of patients with severe illness due to COVID-19 will continue to rise. As the most severe illness is often more than a week after initial symptoms, there tends to be a little lag between the increase in total cases and the increase in more severe cases.

“The ongoing increase in activity in our area highlights the importance of three things. First and most significantly, it is tremendously important to take precautions in our everyday lives. The precautions that many people were taking in late March but have now relaxed are more important now than they were then. Limiting contacts that are not strictly necessary, wearing a mask or face shield if close contact can't be avoided, and washing the hands regularly are the best things we can do to avoid infection ourselves. More importantly for those of us who may not be at high risk for severe illness, these actions help decrease the chance of unknowingly transmitting and infection to someone who may be more vulnerable.

“Second, it is important to continue to use protective equipment as we have recommended within Iowa Specialty Hospital. Every patient should be wearing at least a cloth mask. For any direct patient care, staff should be using both a surgical mask and eye protection. Staff without direct patient care responsibilities should continue to use a cloth mask properly and consistently. It doesn't work if it isn't on and covering both the mouth and the nose.

“Finally, it is important that we continue to use telehealth and measures like the outdoor lab draw or curbside pharmacy pick-up that minimize the number of patients who need to be in the facility.

“This next few weeks is likely to be the biggest challenge for our COVID-19 response and the measures we have put in place. If everyone does their part, we will be able to continue providing the excellent care people expect from Iowa Specialty Hospital while keeping everyone safe.”

Michael McLoughlin, MD, MS, FACP  
Internal Medicine

## **Aplington-Parkersburg Puts Season on Hold**

Just one day into the high school baseball and softball seasons, public health officials have required both the Aplington-Parkersburg baseball and softball teams to self-quarantine for 14 days after multiple players came into close contact with students who tested positive for COVID-19. The team continues to practice with the players who have not come into direct contact with people who have tested positive. Aplington-Parkersburg will not play its scheduled games for the next two weeks and plan to return to play on June 28.

This week, Woodbine confirmed that a member of the school's baseball team tested positive for COVID-19. Local county public health officials recommended the entire team self-quarantine for 14 days from the last time the athlete was at practice.

Last Friday, Central Lyon and George-Little Rock had multiple softball players in direct contact with someone who tested positive for the virus. Those players have been told to self-quarantine for 14 days and resume competition June 25.

Previously, on Tuesday, June 2, the Eagle Grove school board voted 3-2 to cancel the softball and baseball seasons after two coaches and several players tested positive for Covid-19.

## **Summer Athletes Allowed to Compete Elsewhere**

After Belmond-Klemme chose not to field summer softball and baseball teams, Eagle Grove also had to cancel summer sports due to a sudden outbreak of COVID-19. In response on Thursday, June 4, Director of the Department of Education Ann Lebo issued an order that waived participation requirements for student athletes of Belmond-Klemme and Eagle Grove (also the Meskwaki Settlement School) for the summer of 2020 only.

Softball and baseball players are allowed to play for any school they choose, provided the school accepts them onto their teams. Director Lebo's order states,

“a high school student athlete who is otherwise eligible to compete in a summer sport during the summer of 2020, but whose school is not offering summer sports, may be permitted to compete for any other member school . . . without a period of ineligibility.

“No member school or associate member school is compelled to serve as a Host School or to allow student athletes who are subject to this waiver to compete for that school's summer sports teams, such participation being at the sound discretion of the member school or associate member school. The costs of transportation to and from the Host School shall be the responsibility of the student athlete or the student athlete's family.

“If a student athlete does not return to the Original School at the conclusion of the summer sports season, the student athlete shall serve a period of ineligible as required by Iowa Administrative Code Rule 281—36.15, subrules (3) and (4), unless an exception in one of those subrules applies.”

We have said all along, we would not object to our athletes competing elsewhere if they have that option.

## **Summer Athletes Not Accepted in Some Schools**

Unfortunately, other schools are not accepting our athletes. Clarion superintendent Bob Olson wrote me to say,

“We are not accepting players from any school district that chose not to play softball or baseball. Although we received requests from both districts to play on CGD baseball and softball teams, we denied those requests. This was done for two main reasons:

1. Players from other districts could displace CGD student/athletes and
2. Players from other districts could be disappointed if not playing as much as they did in their home district.

I received similar responses from Garner, Hampton, and West Hancock.

**Governor Extends Disaster Proclamation**

On Tuesday May 26, 2020, Governor Reynolds signed a new proclamation temporarily continuing the public health emergency associated with the COVID-19 pandemic. With this action, public attendance at public meetings such as school board meetings may continue to be limited as necessary.

Even after the Disaster Emergency Proclamation expires (whether on June 25 or at the conclusion of any further extension), governmental bodies may choose to hold electronic meetings as long as the requirements of Iowa Code Chapter 21 are followed. In addition, governmental entities that wish to hold in-person meetings are not prohibited from doing so, provided the guidance from the Iowa Department of Health concerning mass gatherings is observed.

**Graduation Scheduled for June 20**

Now that Wright County Public Health will allow schools to hold a graduation ceremony, we are preparing for such a ceremony on Saturday, June 20, at 2:00 PM (rain date June 21).

We believe an outdoor ceremony in our football stadium could be performed with maximum social distancing and minimal risk.

We need to use the home bleachers so we can utilize the sound system. We plan to seat the graduates in the bleachers in assigned spaces. We will set up a small stage on the track, directly in front of the grandstand and facing the field. When prompted, graduates will leave the bleachers and proceed to the track, and then across the stage, one at a time. Diplomas will be handed without handshakes.

Boxes adequately spaced apart will be painted onto the football field. Families may bring lawn chairs or blankets and remain seated in their boxes in family units of nine or fewer.

All attendees must wear masks and maintain social distance.

According to state health rules, outdoor gatherings with grandstands and other permanent seating must be limited to 50% of the venue's normal operating capacity. Outdoor gatherings without permanent seating must be limited to allow social distancing guidelines of six feet of physical space between groups and individuals in attendance.

**Prom Remains Postponed**

Activities are not yet allowed in schools during the month of June, so prom cannot be held at this time.

## COVID-19 Return to Learn Plan

**Background:**

Not until this week, on Tuesday, June 16, the Iowa Department of Education (DE) released their requirements for a *Return to Learn* plan that is to be submitted back to the DE within 15 days and by July 1.

**Three Plans:**

The DE calls for three plans.

1. The *Return to Learn* plan focuses on how to resume classes in this time of COVID-19. The DE's plan is primarily for those schools that only engaged in *Voluntary Learning* in the spring.
2. The *Return to Learn* list of assurances is a checklist that is submitted to the DE and posted for public review.
3. The *Guidance for Reopening* will be coming from the DE in July.

**Preparation for Possible Contingencies:**

I envision five potential scenarios for classes throughout the coming school year. I describe them in the box below.

**Health Condition:**

<b>HealthCon 5:</b>	This is our normal state of readiness.
<b>HealthCon 4:</b>	All students attend. We take the precautions we take during an influenza outbreak with social distancing maximized with the use masks.
<b>HealthCon 3:</b>	We operate with a hybrid model with some students attending and others remaining home and participating through remote learning.
<b>HealthCon 2:</b>	Students remain home; teachers come to school daily. Classes continue through remote learning.
<b>HealthCon 1:</b>	All classes are cancelled. School is made up at a later date.

**Recommended Action:**

I recommend the board move to approve for submission the Return to Learn Action Plan and the Return to Learn list of assurances pending further necessary revisions.