

COVID-19 Report and Discussion

As of Tuesday, December 15, 2020

Attendance Rate Remains Strong

Attendance remains strong in both our school buildings. Unexpectedly, our attendance is running far better than in a normal year.

All last week our attendance was above average. For example, Thursday, December 10, our Belmond-Klemme high school had 8 students absent for an absence percentage of 2 percent. Our elementary school was missing 3 students for a rate of only 1 percent.

This week, as of Tuesday, December 15, our Belmond-Klemme high school had 8 students absent for an absence percentage of 2 percent. Our elementary school also had 8 students missing for a rate of 2 percent.

School Nurse Holly Friederich believes that all our precautions, i.e., masks, hand washing, and social distance, are not only limiting exposure to COVID-19; they are also containing the spread of typical, seasonal colds and flu.

Success Slowing the Spread

Among our student body, we have recorded very few students as positive for the COVID-19 virus in recent weeks. We are testing our faculty and staff weekly, and for two weeks in November and December, we had seen no one test positive.

As a reminder, our circumstances are similar to the emerging research—that students are not spreading the virus in school. The Centers for Disease Control reported on October 2 that children aged 5–11 years were approximately half as likely to transmit the COVID-19 virus as adolescents aged 12–17 years.

A similar finding was reflected by the World Health Organization (WHO). A report on October 21 by the WHO suggests that children under the age of ten are less susceptible and less infectious than older ones.

Area Positivity Rates Have Moderated

As of Tuesday, December 15, the 14-day positivity rate for COVID-19 in Wright County was holding steady at 17 percent. This is the measure by which schools should decide whether or not to hold classes in school.

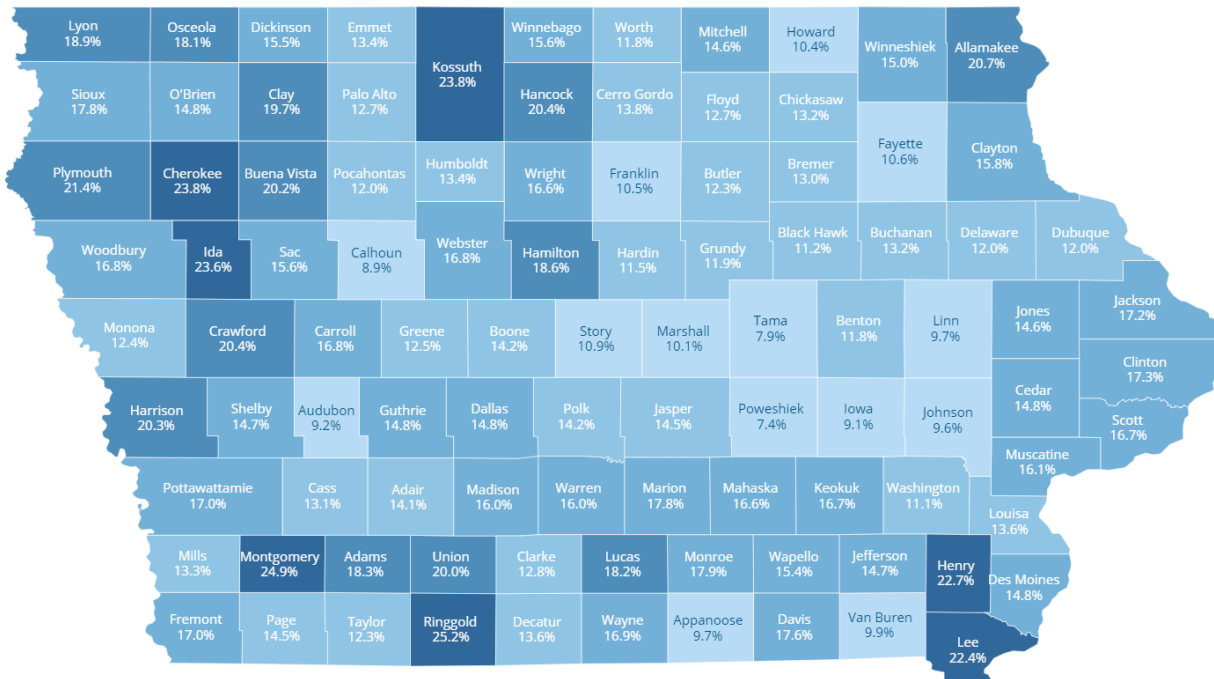
North Central Iowa rates have moderated some since the hottest period which was during November.

Current Positivity Rate

As of Tuesday, December 15, 2020, . . .

COVID-19 in IOWA

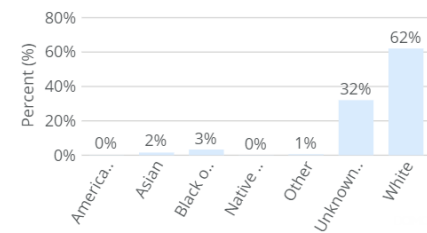
% Positive (Past 14 Day Average) by County



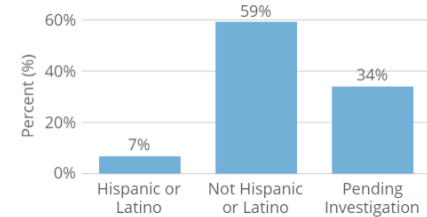
Wright County Infection Rate

County	Positive Cases	Cases Per 100,000 Population
Buena Vista	3,379	17,002
Plymouth	3,121	12,437
Jones	2,479	11,950
Calhoun	1,139	11,743
Sioux	4,089	11,713
Henry	2,315	11,536
Crawford	1,943	11,324
Webster	4,091	11,277
Woodbury	11,508	11,223
Wright	1,417	11,166
Carroll	2,190	10,866
O'Brien	1,464	10,578
Dubuque	10,037	10,363
Sac	975	10,032
Hancock	1,054	9,839
Winneshiek	1,033	9,821
Osceola	593	9,818
Cherokee	1,099	9,708
Lyon	1,145	9,694
Tama	1,633	9,660

Positive Cases by Race



Positive Cases by Ethnicity



State-wide Infection Rate

On Tuesday, December 17, when this report was written, Iowa's COVID-19 death count continued to climb. At 10:00 A.M. Tuesday, the state was reporting 3,340 COVID-19-related deaths, an increase of 67 deaths since the state's tally at 10 a.m. Monday, according to the state's website: [Coronavirus.Iowa.gov](https://www.coronavirus.iowa.gov) website.

Also Tuesday, the state reported that there are 258,251 confirmed cases of coronavirus, an increase of 1,338 since 10 a.m. Monday. Statewide, Iowa's 14-day positivity rate was 14.2% on Tuesday.

On Tuesday, 798 people were hospitalized in Iowa, up from 764 on Monday. Hospitals admitted 85 patients, up from 76. Also, there were 166 patients in the ICU, up from 160 on Monday. There were 88 patients on ventilators, up from 86.

By comparison this time last month, 1,510 people were hospitalized in Iowa. There were 288 patients in the ICU and 130 patients on ventilators.

School Personnel May Receive Priority for Vaccinations

On Monday, about 150 frontline health care workers at the University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics received the first dose of the two-dose Pfizer vaccine. Iowa officials expect to receive 172,000 doses of COVID-19 vaccines by the end of the month. Like in other states, the doses will come in weekly waves. The vaccine will not be available to most people immediately.

Educators may be scheduled for the second phase of vaccinations.

The independent experts on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices, or ACIP, voted that health care personnel treating patients, as well as workers and residents in long-term care facilities, should get the vaccine in the first round (phase 1a). The committee will consider additional groups.

Phase 1b will focus on essential workers, the committee has said. That could include police, firefighters, workers in food production, and transportation and teachers. Education groups have been pushing for school staff to be included in that next round.

Governors ultimately will have authority over how the vaccine is distributed in their states, and counties may further refine priorities at the local level.

WHO Warns Against Use of Face Shields

The following is a reprint of an article that appeared in *BestLife* December, 2, 2020, by Zachary Mack. <https://bestlifeonline.com/face-shield-who/>

In the update that was published on Dec. 1, the WHO carefully outlined that the use of face masks is superior to the use of face shields because the latter won't block the wearer's exhaled droplets and can't stop them from inhaling droplets either.

Outside of being used in combination with a mask, the WHO did outline a specific situation in which they could be considered. "In the context of COVID-19, some children may not be able to wear a mask due to disabilities or specific situations such as speech classes where the teacher needs to see their mouths," the guidelines read. "In these cases, face shields may be considered an alternative to masks, but they do not provide the equivalent protection in keeping the virus from being transmitted to others."

The updated recommendations also state that any face shield being used "should cover the entire face, wrap around the sides of the face, and extend to below the chin. Caution should be taken while wearing one to avoid injuries that could break it and harm the eyes or face."

The CDC has also stated that face shields are not an acceptable replacement for face masks. "Face shields have large gaps below and alongside the face, where your respiratory droplets may escape and reach others around you," the agency's guidelines warn. "At this time, we do not know how much protection a face shield provides to people around you."

CDC director says schools are among 'safest places' kids can be

Robert Redfield stated coronavirus infections "were not acquired in schools" at White House COVID-19 briefing

By [Cortney Moore](#) | [Fox News](#)

Published 8:15 AM, Friday, November 20, 2020

<https://www.foxnews.com/health/cdc-director-schools-among-safest-places-kids>

When it comes down to where children are safest during the coronavirus pandemic, CDC Director Robert Redfield says schools are the best place to be.

At a coronavirus task force briefing held at the White House on Thursday, Redfield said evidence shows that students are contracting the respiratory illness from family gatherings and local events rather than schools.

“The infections that we’ve identified in schools when they’ve been evaluated were not acquired in schools. They were actually acquired in the community and in the household,” he explained, citing task force coordinator Dr. Deborah L. Birx, who believes Americans are getting comfortable in removing protective face masks.

“The truth is, for kids K-12, one of the safest places they can be, from our perspective, is to remain in school, and it’s really important that following the data, making sure we don’t make emotional decisions about what to close and what not to close,” Redfield continued. “I’m here to say clearly the data strongly supports that K-12 schools — as well as institutes of higher learning — really are not where we’re having our challenges.”

In October, the CDC updated its report on [COVID-19 Trends Among School-Aged Children — United States](#), which analyzed health data between March and September.

Research at the time showed out of 277,285 positive coronavirus cases in schools throughout the country, transmission among adolescents between the ages of 12 and 17 was approximately twice that in children between the ages of 5 and 11.

Conversely, more recent data put out by the [American Association of Pediatrics](#) on Monday stated more than 1 million children have contracted COVID-19. However, this estimated number does not necessarily mean the coronavirus was transmitted from open schools and face-to-face learning.

According to Redfield, “It would be counterproductive from my point of view, from a public health point of view, just in containing the epidemic, if there was an emotional response, to say, ‘Let’s close the schools.’”