January 27, 2022
Welcome to the Department of Health and Welfare’s monthly briefing on the department’s latest news, communications activities, and resources for the COVID-19 pandemic.
New sections are marked “NEW,” and all other sections are up to date as of the time of publishing.

IDAHO ACTIVATES CRISIS STANDARDS OF CARE IN THREE HEALTH DISTRICTS IN SOUTHERN IDAHO

The Idaho Department of Health and Welfare (DHW) activated Crisis Standards of Care (CSC) on Monday, Jan. 24, in accordance with IDAPA 16.02.09 – Crisis Standards of Care For Healthcare Entities in three local public health districts – Southwest District Health, Central District Health, and South Central District Health – due to severe staffing and blood shortages.

The high number of both clinical and non-clinical staff unable to work due to the impacts of COVID-19 infections coupled with a nation-wide staffing shortage limiting access to contracted traveling staff is impacting current hospital operations. It is also limiting the ability of hospitals to maintain capacity for things like intensive care beds due to inadequate staffing. Additionally, a nation-wide shortage of blood and blood products is significantly impacting healthcare systems, and most have implemented blood conservation strategies.

This action was taken after Saint Alphonsus Health System requested CSC activation. DHW Director Dave Jeppesen convened the CSC Activation Advisory Committee virtually on Jan. 21. The committee recommended that CSC be activated statewide. Director Jeppesen made the decision to activate only in southern Idaho after reviewing current hospital capacity regionally. Other regions of the state are likely to move into CSC if current COVID-19 trends continue.

“The highly contagious Omicron variant has thrown us a curve ball,” said DHW Director Jeppesen. “Once again, the situation in our hospitals and health systems is dire – we don’t have enough resources to adequately treat patients. Please get vaccinated and boosted if you can and wear a high-quality protective mask in public places. Omicron is so much more contagious than previous variants, and even though a lower percentage of cases are ending up in the hospital, the record number of cases is still putting strain on our healthcare system.”
DHW PANDEMIC RECOMMENDATIONS ARE AVAILABLE IN ONE FLYER

COVID-19 recommendations and guidance is changing quickly. Stay informed with all the relevant information you need to know to reduce your risk of COVID-19 disease during the pandemic. It’s available at coronavirus.idaho.gov under the vaccine tab at https://coronavirus.idaho.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/DHWPandemicRecs_ThreePager_220121_Final_R2.pdf

FREE, AT-HOME COVID-19 TESTS ARE NOW AVAILABLE from the federal government at covidtests.gov. Every home in the U.S. is eligible to order four free, at-home COVID-19 tests. Orders will usually ship in 7-12 days.

PCR tests are widely available at local healthcare providers and pharmacies, but results take longer. To find a test site near you, visit https://my.castlighthealth.com/corona-virus-testing-sites/ or contact your local urgent care clinic or pharmacy to get an appointment.
DHW PROVIDES ACCURATE INFORMATION EVERY DAY TO HELP COMBAT COVID-19 MISINFORMATION AND DISINFORMATION

One of the issues that all government and healthcare organizations face during the pandemic is the abundance of false and misleading information available on social media and other communications channels.

DHW remains focused on delivering accurate and up-to-date information daily through the following channels:

- **Social media** - Twitter, Facebook, Instagram @dhwstories, YouTube, and LinkedIn
- **DHW Voice blog** (new posts on Tuesdays and Fridays)
  - COVID-19 Q&A: Masks are an important tool to protect against disease
  - From DHW Director Dave Jeppesen: The data tells the story of the vaccinated vs. the unvaccinated in Idaho
  - COVID-19 Q&A: When will the pandemic end?
  - Idaho COVID-19 numbers are trending in the wrong direction
  - COVID-19 resources to answer your questions about Omicron
- **Weekly COVID-19 media briefings**
- Idaho’s Coronavirus website and DHW website
- Daily responses to information requests from the public and the media
- Public Service Announcements
COVID-19 DATA ONLINE

COVID-19 statistics, including breakthrough cases and vaccination status of cases, can be found on the COVID-19 Case, Laboratory, and Hospital Data Dashboard. State-level case, laboratory, and hospital data is updated by 5 p.m. MT every day, excluding Sundays and holidays. Data on variants of concern and percent positivity is updated by 5 p.m. MT on Thursdays.

The COVID-19 Vaccine Data Dashboard includes data on COVID-19 vaccinations by county, public health district, age group, race, and ethnicity.

DHW SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

DHW continues to target misinformation and disinformation on all of our social media platforms, and on our blog at DHWBlog.com. Posts continue to share information about the safety of the vaccines and where to get vaccinated as well as daily updates on percent positivity, case counts, and vaccination milestones.

Follow us on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn.

Dedicated to strengthening the health, safety, and independence of Idahoans.
COVID-19 VACCINATION INFORMATION ONLINE

The COVID-19 vaccination information web page includes information on when and where to get vaccinated, and what to expect at a vaccine appointment. The COVID-19 vaccine section on the coronavirus website is updated regularly. The page includes the comprehensive COVID-19 Vaccine FAQ, recordings of DHW’s media briefings, underlying medical conditions that put people at greater risk for COVID-19, and Governor’s actions, among other resources. There is also a link available with resources for COVID-19 vaccine providers.

MEDIA BRIEFINGS

DHW hosts regular briefings for the media about COVID-19 in Idaho. The remote events have included updates from Gov. Little and DHW officials, followed by a question-and-answer session with members of the media. The general public can listen in.

For more information about the briefings, visit coronavirus.idaho.gov, and watch the department’s Facebook and Twitter accounts for announcements. Recordings of past media briefings are posted on the state’s coronavirus website under the vaccine tab.

COMMUNICATIONS FORUM

DHW’s Office of Communications, in partnership with the Gov. Brad Little’s communications director, hosts a forum for communications professionals in state agencies, health districts, healthcare agencies and facilities, and stakeholders to discuss COVID-19-related communications efforts and strategies. If you are a communications professional and would like to join the call, send an email to communications@dhw.idaho.gov.