



Public Health
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Henderson County Department of Public Health

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Health Department to prioritize high-risk case investigations

HENDERSONVILLE, N.C. (December 21, 2020) – The Henderson County Department of Public Health will prioritize high-risk case investigations in response to the growing volume of COVID-19 cases, asking individuals to follow and self-impose restrictions as warranted.

Current caseloads make it increasingly unlikely for the Health Department to contact each positive case in a timely fashion. This is partly due to testing capacity in the community being overwhelmed paired with longer laboratory reporting times.

In many instances the Health Department learns about cases 7-10 days from the initial exposure, which nullifies the benefit of case investigations and contact tracing. About a month ago the Health Department would see about 30 positive cases reported on a single day. On Dec. 18, there were 194 positive cases.

Any organization that provides COVID-19 testing is responsible for contacting tested individuals to inform them of their positive or negative results. Those organizations should also provide information at the time of testing if their results confirm a positive COVID-19 case. This includes positive individuals informing potential close contacts they may have been exposed.

The Health Department will continue to prioritize case investigations that present a higher risk as well as those in school settings. Most others should be able to follow and self-impose restrictions as warranted.

“Our unique challenge today is trying to manage the very worst part of the pandemic while simultaneously trying to plan and implement the largest vaccination campaign in our history,” said Health Director Steve Smith. “Given these difficult choices, public health will prioritize vaccinations as the primary strategy for reducing harm and minimizing negative impacts to the community.”

While news of the vaccine rollout is promising, it will be months before there is enough vaccine to cover everyone who wants it. The community should continue to do their part to help with basic preventative measures such as wearing a mask, social distancing and hand washing.

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