



Flathead City-County Health Department

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For immediate release:

October 19, 2020

Kalispell MT — Flathead County continues to see an alarming uptick in COVID-19 cases, related hospitalizations, and deaths. Recent case investigations have found that COVID-19 exposures are linked to social gatherings in indoor spaces, such as birthday parties and group dinners, as well as large events like weddings and trade shows.

On October 15th, the Flathead County Board of Health voted against enacting further measures to prevent community spread of COVID-19 in Flathead County. The Flathead City-County Health Department urges community members to take personal action to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health of our vulnerable community members. “It is vital that individuals follow the recommended steps to prevent the spread of COVID-19,” says Tamalee St James Robinson, Interim Health Officer of the Flathead City-County Health Department.

FCCHD recommends that the community adhere to the following recommendations:

- Flathead County residents should limit their number of close, non-household contacts to no more than six persons per week, as well as limiting the duration of close, non-household contacts to less than fifteen minutes whenever possible.
- Where possible, Flathead County residents are encouraged to utilize contact-free services of businesses, including but not limited to drive-through and take-out food services, contactless delivery, and the like.
- When Flathead County residents have to leave their homes, residents are encouraged to minimize the number of trips, locations, and time to the greatest extent possible.
- Flathead County residents should be very vigilant in adhering to physical distancing requirements and recommendations, hand hygiene and surface sanitation procedures, and staying away from others when sick.
- Flathead County residents should be vigilant in adhering to masking requirements and recommendations while in public spaces and while within close contact of non-household members.

As the holiday season approaches, individuals should be especially mindful of the events they choose to attend. For example, if a positive case attends a social event while infectious, and social distancing or mask usage are not maintained, there is the potential that FCCHD staff may have to require a 14-day quarantine for a large number of people that attended the event. According to the CDC, individuals who test positive for COVID-19 are infectious for 48 hours prior to exhibiting symptoms.

“The increasing number of positive cases and the evidence of widespread community transmission have brought Flathead County to a point where tough decisions need to be made,” states Robinson. “The growing rate of COVID-19 in our community is not sustainable for our healthcare system, our public health staff, and our schools. We have to decide what is more important- social gatherings or keeping our schools and businesses open. It is up to all of us to slow the spread.”

Flathead County received 137 new COVID-19 cases over the weekend and to date there have been 23 confirmed COVID-19 related deaths of Flathead County residents. For more information about COVID-19 please visit <https://flatheadhealth.org/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>.

