

***FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE***

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**Center for Human Development (CHD), Union County COVID-19 Update**

UNION COUNTY – Union County has seen an increase in COVID-19 cases over the past week. This increase could be a post-holiday bump, but it is also likely that the highly transmissible Omicron variant is driving this increase in infections. Today we are reporting 102 cases from the weekend, and last week’s total was 128. If forecasting for the next month is accurate this is just the beginning of a surge that could be unlike any we have experienced thus far.

As shared by the Oregon Health Authority (OHA) last week, case investigation and contact tracing will not effectively slow the spread of the disease. As a result, guidelines for how CHD responds to COVID-19 have changed: rather than contacting everyone who tests positive or is identified as a contact, we ask that people follow the guidance provided here to limit spread. If you need wrap around services or other COVID-19 related supports to support your isolation or quarantine, you can contact the OHA case support hotline (211) or CHD at 541-962-8800.

Because of this change, we want to make sure that Union County residents have up to date guidance on what to do if they test positive, what to do if they have symptoms and were a contact to someone with COVID-19. Most importantly, we want people to have access to wrap around services to help them get the support they need during isolation and quarantine and to be aware of treatments that are available. “We know that this is a major change from how we have handled cases and contacts since the beginning of the pandemic” shares Carrie Brogoitti, Public Health Administrator at CHD “but this opt-in approach will be the most efficient way to handle the volume of cases we will see with this surge and after as COVID-19 will likely be something we are living with for a while.” This shift will also allow CHD to focus its resources on higher risk setting like long term care facilities and other congregate settings, health care settings, schools and early learning, and others where COVID-19 can spread quickly and where the impacts can be more severe.

CHD is currently working on developing a resource guide that will help Union County residents know what to do if they test positive for COVID-19 or if they are a close contact with a confirmed case along with information on how to access any wraparound services you may need during isolation or quarantine. This resource guide will be available on CHD’s webpage ([www.chdinc.org](http://www.chdinc.org)). Please be patient with us as we continue to add information as these changes are happening quickly and we are working as fast as we can to update our information for the community.

The Omicron variant may be less severe in most people compared with previous variants, but it can still cause severe illness particularly in people with underlying health conditions and those who are not vaccinated. Additionally, the sheer volume of cases we expect to see will likely impact on our health care system and other areas of our daily lives. As we brace for this surge, vaccines and boosters are protecting against severe disease. Vaccines are available at local pharmacies, doctor’s offices and CHD. Currently, Pfizer, Moderna and Johnson and Johnson are available. We can limit COVID-19’s impact in our county with basic prevention strategies that slow its spread including vaccination, social distancing, wearing masks, staying home when sick, isolating positive cases, quarantining close contacts, keeping surfaces clean and washing hands.

We have been notified by OHA that CHD will be receiving some at-home test kits for distribution to our community, but these kits can only be used for specific purposes (for populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19 and have not historically had access to COVID-19 testing, and persons who have a known exposure or have COVID-19-like symptoms). These tests cannot be used for screening, and there will not be enough for us to give one to all Union County residents. We will continue working with our partners to see if additional testing kits can be obtained and distributed.

If you have COVID-19 symptoms or are a close contact to a confirmed case and need testing please contact your health care provider or CHD for testing options. Additionally, free drive-up testing is being offered by the Oregon Health Authority, you can find information about upcoming test dates and how to register at [www.doineedacovid19test.com](http://www.doineedacovid19test.com).