



Flathead City-County Health Department

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Flathead Family Planning
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Population Health Services
406-751-8101 FAX 406-758-2497
WIC Services
406-751-8170 FAX 406-751-8171
Animal Shelter
406-752-1310 FAX 406-752-1546

Memorandum

January 26, 2022

To: School Superintendents for Immediate Distribution

From: Joe Russell, Health Officer

Re: Changes to Quarantine Procedures

The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) and the Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE) have released a statement supporting state, local, territorial, and tribal health departments in moving away from conducting contact tracing at this time in the COVID-19 pandemic. Moving away from contact tracing will eliminate any quarantine recommendations by the Health Department.

The reason for this change is based on several factors that reduce the usefulness of contact tracing for the current COVID-19 variant, Omicron. Some factors that led to this decision include a large number of cases who do not have symptoms or have very mild symptoms, the increase in individuals who are vaccinated, and the shorter the amount of time between when an individual is exposed and when they start to develop symptoms, also referred to as a shorter incubation period.

Effective immediately, the Flathead City-County Health Department will no longer be contact tracing for COVID-19 cases in the general population. However, the Department's position has not changed when it comes to isolating cases and notifying contacts that are considered to be high risk. High risk contacts are individuals who belong to the following groups:

- People over the age of 65
- Immunocompromised individuals
- Health care workers
- Law enforcement and other first responders

The Department will continue to use its automated text-based system to notify cases of their need to isolate and fill out an investigation report. **Individuals that test positive will receive a text message with a link to a case investigation form. If for some reason a positive case does not receive a text link, they can complete their case investigation by clicking on the link provided on flatheadhealth.org. This automated system is a HIPAA-compliant survey and will not compromise protected health information.**

Individuals who test positive may notify their own close contacts that they have been exposed to COVID-19. Close contacts should consider testing on days two and five after their exposure, or if they develop symptoms. Over the next few days, the Health Department should be receiving rapid antigen tests to hand out to the public. Please watch our website for updates on availability of these tests.



Providing quality public health services to ensure the conditions for a healthy community.



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

We continue to encourage vaccination as a method of prevention for all individuals aged 5 and older. Please visit our website or call 406-751-8250 to learn more about where to receive a vaccine.