



CONTACT INFORMATION:

Tina Sullivan
Public Health Supervisor, Nursing
Juneau County Health Department
608-847-9373

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Juneau County to Shift Focus in Pandemic Response Efforts

[Mauston, WI] – After nearly two years responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Juneau County Health Department will be doubling down on vaccination and community testing support in an effort to lower transmission and reduce disease severity and death amongst residents. Last week, the Department of Health Services (DHS) encouraged local health departments to prioritize high impact public health response activities based on local conditions.

“The Omicron variant really changed the game for our local efforts. Transmission is happening so rapidly within households and worksites that by the time our team is involved, everyone is already exposed or ill, “ explained Tina Sullivan, Public Health Supervisor of Nursing at the Juneau County Health Department. “Our team continues to offer weekly vaccination clinics as this is our most powerful tool at this stage in the pandemic.”

Vaccines have been widely available in Juneau County for about a year but the County continues to lag behind the state with a vaccination rate of only 51%. According to DHS, people not fully vaccinated were hospitalized with COVID-19 at a rate 10 times higher than people who were fully vaccinated and died from COVID-19 at a rate of 14 times higher.

The Juneau County Health Department will be prioritizing vaccination efforts, community testing support, and employer education and outreach to slow the transmission in the community. Omicron is highly contagious and the current 7-day average of new confirmed cases in Wisconsin is 18,836. During the peak in November 2020, the 7-day average of new confirmed was 6,496. The public needs to take action when they suspect they have COVID-19 and seek out a test and immediately isolate from others. Public health staff will be educating employer’s on the best ways to prevent spread in their worksites and support their employees who are sick or caring for their ill loved ones.

During the next few weeks, the Juneau County Health Department will continue to conduct disease investigations with high risk individuals only. The public may not get a call directly from the department. Instead, Juneau County residents are encouraged to go to the Juneau County Emergency Information webpage. Here the community can find important educational materials on what to do if you have been exposed, how to get tested if you are experiencing symptoms, and what to do to protect you and your loved ones if you are positive.

Juneau County Emergency Information Page: <https://www.co.juneau.wi.gov/emergency-information.html>

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