ADAIR COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT IMPLEMENTS COUNTY-WIDE MASK ORDER IN LIGHT OF RISING CASES OF COVID-19

Kirksville, MO 11/24/20 – The Board of the Adair County Health Department has voted unanimously to implement a county-wide mask mandate in an effort to slow the transmission of COVID-19 among residents.

When the Board met Oct. 26, there had been 551 confirmed cases of the virus in the county. At the time of its Nov. 23 meeting, that number had risen to 1,141. The case total for that 28-day period was 591 which is nearly 52% of all cases since the first one reported in Adair County on March 21, 2020.

The Health Department has the statutory authority to “…Establish appropriate control measures which may include…the creation and enforcement of adequate orders to prevent the spread of the disease and other measures considered by the department and/or local health authority as appropriate disease control measures based upon the disease…and any other available information related to the…disease or infection: and (E) Establish and maintain quarantine, isolation or other measures as required.”

“The White House Coronavirus Task Force, Missouri’s governor and the Department of Health and Senior Services, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization have all stated that everyone needs to wear a mask at all times outside of their home to slow the rapid transmission of COVID-19,” said Jim LeBaron, administrator of the Adair County Health Department. “If everyone would comply, there would be no need for this measure. But since so many people in Adair County simply will not wear one to protect others and themselves, and since our case numbers are far too high, we needed to put a mandate into effect. Our healthcare providers, emergency workers and our schools will not be able to sustain the numbers we’re seeing now,” LeBaron said.

The county-wide mask mandate, which goes into effect at midnight, Nov. 25, requires all people while in Adair County to wear masks in any public accommodation or public indoor space unless they can “absolutely maintain a distance of six feet.” Masks are not required to be worn by someone while alone in an enclosed office space, or by a speaker to a group as long as the speaker can “absolutely guarantee that they will be able to maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet apart from all others during presentation.”
The mandate further states: “Face coverings may be removed in restaurants and bars when individuals are actively eating or drinking, but must be worn at all times otherwise.”

Owners, managers, operators or employees of an area regulated by the mandate may refuse service to anyone who refuses to wear a mask. If that person is not wearing a mask due to a medical condition or hearing loss, they are not required to produce medical documentation certifying any condition.

The mandate also requires masks in all public outdoor spaces and while taking public transportation, taxis or ride-sharing services. Public outdoor spaces include bus stops, sidewalks, parks, playgrounds, farmer’s markets and restaurant/bar patio seating areas, unless a distance of at least six feet can be maintained from all other people.

Face coverings are not required while participating in a sports activity; however, those on the bench and all coaches are required to wear them.

There are some exceptions to who is required to abide by the mandate, including those who are deaf or hard of hearing, children younger than five years old and children under the age of six while at daycare or school. No child under the age of two should ever wear a mask due to a risk of suffocation. Also excepted are people with medical or mental health conditions or a disability that prevents them from wearing a mask. This includes people with medical conditions for whom a mask would obstruct their breathing, and anyone unconscious, incapacitated or otherwise unable to remove a mask without assistance.

Copies of the official mandate are available in the Adair County Clerk’s Office and will be published in upcoming editions of the Kirksville Crier and NEMO Trader. A copy will also be available on the Adair County Health Department website.

For businesses that want to post a notice of the mandate, one is available for printing on the Adair County Health Department website under the “Forms” link at the top right of the homepage. The document is named “Mask Notice.”

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