



2390 W Station St, Kankakee, Illinois 60901
Phone: (815) 802-9400 | Fax: (815) 802-9391
www.kankakeehealth.org

11/13/2020

Dear Residents, Business Owners, Faith Leaders, and Officials,

In recent weeks, all areas of Illinois have seen increases in the COVID-19 positivity rate. Of course, some of that increase attributes to higher numbers of persons being tested. However, more testing, by itself, cannot possibly account for the higher positivity rate. Approximately 5,250 COVID-19 tests are conducted in Kankakee County on a weekly basis, and our current positivity rate is 17%. The virus is continuing to spread and infecting more people.

On August 7, 2020 the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) issued regulations requiring that all businesses, services, facilities, or organizations open to the public must ensure that any employees, customers, or other individuals on their premises over the age of two are masked if they cannot maintain a six-foot social distance. While there are exceptions for those who cannot medically tolerate a face covering or for those who are actively eating or drinking, these exceptions are very narrow. It has been our experience that most businesses are compliant, and in addition, have posted signs, distanced their tables, and have hand sanitizer available for staff and patrons.

Unfortunately, the metrics for Region 7 (Kankakee and Will County) required action by the Governor, and on Friday October 23, 2020 Governor Pritzker issued further restrictions for Region 7 (Will and Kankakee Counties). These restrictions include no indoor dining in bars or restaurants, groups must reserve a table, no congregating, patrons must be seated at tables (at least 6' apart), and they must close at 11pm. Additionally, gatherings of more than 10 people are prohibited, unless exempted by law or regulation. **This does not apply to schools.** Please see the attached document included with this letter that outlines the newest restrictions.

The Kankakee County Health Department continues to do what we have been doing since the beginning stages of our response-support, consultation, education, contact tracing, working with Long Term Care Facilities and other congregate settings. Recently, we have ramped up our contact tracing and Investigation staff with 10 additional staff. If you are contacted by the health department as a positive case or a close contact, you will see the following number (312)-777-1999, please make sure to answer the call. We are working with schools and other congregate sites and the public to help them navigate the changing regulations and guidance. But... **The Covid-19 virus is still here, and we need your help!** I ask that you be a role model and wear your face covering PROPERLY. Follow the guidelines so we can reduce the spread of COVID-19 and get back to Phase 4. We all want to go back to the life we knew pre-COVID. So far, more than 80 people in Kankakee County alone have died from COVID-19.

Recently, IDPH released a statement indicating the need for further testing, which we support.

"In the face of increasing infections, we need to promote more testing, not less, to identify new cases and interrupt further transmission," said Illinois Department of Public Health Director Dr. Ngozi Ezike.



2390 W Station St, Kankakee, Illinois 60901
Phone: (815) 802-9400 | Fax: (815) 802-9391
www.kankakeehealth.org

"Given that asymptomatic individuals have been linked to virus spread, we will maintain our more stringent guidance to support testing of any Illinois resident who thinks they may have been exposed, as well as asymptomatic close contacts of confirmed cases 5-7 days post exposure,"

This letter is an appeal to all of you to do your part in curbing the transmission of COVID-19. We all want to get back to our normal lives, but there is still too much at risk. This is a time to think of others. You may be healthy, but many others are at risk due to compromised immune systems and other serious (and sometimes not so serious) health conditions.

It's all about We, not Me. Your actions will make a difference! Please do your part to reduce the transmission of COVID-19.

If you see an establishment not complying with the requirements, feel free to call us at (815) 802-9400 or go to our website and submit a complaint in writing via info@kankakeehealth.org. We will investigate and do any required follow up, and if necessary, seek legal recourse. Our goal is to gain compliance through education and support to make the Kankakee County community a safe place to be.

If you have any questions concerning COVID-19 or the regulations, the below websites are very good resources. Additionally, you can also see our social media for further information. Please wear your mask in public and in small groups, even at home. Continue to maintain social distance, wash your hands, and get your flu shot. It's not too late to help save a life.

John J. Bevis, B.S., M.P.H., LEHP
Public Health Administrator
Kankakee County Health Department
www.dph.illinois.gov
www.cdc.gov
www.kankakeecountyhealth.org
<http://www2.illinois.gov/dceo/Pages/default.aspx>