

For Immediate Release

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Washtenaw County Health Department Lifts Stay-in-Place Order for Students *University-associated cases trending down; Washtenaw cases remain high*

YPSILANTI, Mich., Nov 2, 2020 – Washtenaw County Health Department is lifting the two-week public health emergency stay-in-place order for University of Michigan undergraduate students. The order is not extended and will expire tomorrow (Nov 3) at 7:00 a.m. The proportion of local COVID-19 cases associated with U-M has decreased, and importantly, this reduction in new, university-associated cases has allowed case investigators and contact tracers to catch up. Overall, the number of cases in Washtenaw County remains high and weekly test positivity has increased to nearly 4%.

Prompt case investigation and contact tracing decreases the spread of COVID-19 once positive cases are identified. Health officials must be able to keep up for the process and recommended isolation or quarantine instructions to be effective. Since most COVID-19 cases continue to be related to social gatherings and events without preventative measures, limiting social gatherings is critical to keeping new cases lower.

“We are grateful for the cooperation of the university and its students on this order. We know this is incredibly difficult for all of us,” says Jimena Loveluck, MSW, health officer for Washtenaw County. “We’re thankful for this small bit of good news, but we all must continue to do everything we can to minimize the impact of COVID-19 on each of us and on our community.”

“Recent weeks have left no doubt that the virus continues to circulate and have also confirmed that we can minimize its negative impacts by continuing to use face coverings and distance and cooperating fully with all public health guidance,” continued Loveluck.

When the local stay-in-place order was issued Oct 20, over 60% of Washtenaw County cases were associated with U-M students, and case investigators and contact tracers were unable to keep up with the sharp increase in these cases. U-M student cases now represent about a third of local COVID-19 cases (33%), although [local cases overall remain high](#) and resources for investigating and tracing cases are still stretched. Washtenaw County has reported over 6,000 confirmed and probable cases of COVID-19 as of Nov 2. The weekly test positivity rate from [MI Safe Start](#) has increased to 3.8%.

Under existing state health orders, everyone must continue to separate themselves from others not already in their household by at least 6 feet and wear a face covering when out in public or in common areas. Limits on gatherings and at indoor facilities and other precautions are also [still in place](#). A local order [further limiting outdoor gatherings](#) to 25 or fewer people in residential settings in Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti remains in effect.

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Violations of local or state orders are subject to the citations and penalties outlined in the Michigan Public Health Code (MCL 333.2451 and 333.2453). Fines of \$500 to \$1000 are possible for local violations.

With Thanksgiving and the winter holiday season approaching, the Health Department reminds everyone that COVID-19 continues to circulate in our community and cases are increasing in non-campus areas. Limiting gatherings as much as possible over the holidays and continuing to use COVID-19 precautions is strongly encouraged. If individuals or students plan to return home or visit family or friends, they should consider staying away from others as much as possible for two weeks prior, wearing a mask in public, and getting tested for COVID-19.

COVID-19 prevention strategies are most effective when combined. Using them remains vital to slowing the spread of illness and preventing as many cases of COVID-19 as possible – especially as the weather becomes colder, more activities are indoors, and [flu](#) may begin to circulate locally.

Testing is recommended for anyone reporting to work in person, with known exposure, or with any mild or unusual symptoms. Symptoms may take up to 14 days after exposure to appear, and individuals are considered contagious two days before symptoms appear. If you are exposed and asymptomatic, please wait 7 to 10 days before testing. A negative test does NOT eliminate the need to quarantine for a full 14 days after exposure.

Local COVID-19 information is available at www.washtenaw.org/covid19. Health Department staff are available to answer questions. Call 734-544-6700 or email L-wchdcontact@washtenaw.org.

Resources from Washtenaw County Health Department

- [COVID-19 Health Orders](#)
- For testing, see www.washtenaw.org/covid19test
- [Prevention and Risk Reduction](#)

Information from the University of Michigan

- University of Michigan <https://campusblueprint.umich.edu/>

Washtenaw County Health Department

The Washtenaw County Health Department promotes health and works to prevent disease and injury in our community. Our mission is to assure, in partnership with the community, the conditions necessary for people to live healthy lives through prevention and protection programs. Visit us at washtenaw.org/health or call 734-544-6700.

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