

October 29, 2020

An open letter to our Washtenaw County Community

Dear Washtenaw County community members and visitors,

The days and week ahead include Halloween, a home University of Michigan versus Michigan State football game, and Election Day, as well as countless happenings important to our community, its members, and its institutions. It is an exciting time and an incredibly challenging one. Unfortunately, the coronavirus that causes COVID-19 continues to circulate. Little has changed about that. As more activities have resumed, our community is one of many with a significant increase in cases, test positivity and hospitalizations. We must be united in our efforts to reduce the spread of illness and lessen the negative impact of COVID-19 in our community.

We the undersigned – including our elected officials, largest universities, and health authorities – urge everyone to work together to prevent the spread of illness whenever possible. Together we can make sure community events happen in new and safer ways. We can celebrate, compete, and exercise our right to vote as safely as possible. But we must do so together and using the best prevention strategies currently available.

COVID-19 is circulating, and cases are increasing in our community. Everyone should be alert to the possibility of exposure if out in public or in contact with others. The virus is primarily spread through direct, person-to-person contact. Social gatherings or events without precautions account for most local infections or exposures.

Everyone should continue to follow all public health guidance:

- Make absolutely sure you do not have any symptoms before going out in public or having contact with others. Don't assume symptoms are allergies or unrelated to COVID-19. **If you have ANY symptoms, stay home and away from others.**
- If you have had known exposure to someone with COVID-19 within the past 14 days, stay home and in quarantine. A negative test during quarantine does not clear you from quarantine.

If you go out or are in contact with others:

- Wear a face covering over your nose and mouth. The only exceptions should be when you are eating, if you are alone, or only with others already in your household.
- Keep at least six feet away from others not in your household.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.

- If you start to feel ill or experience symptoms, isolate yourself from others as soon as possible. [Seek testing](#) and continue to stay away from others while you wait for your results.

Public health guidance for gatherings and events:

- In-person gatherings increase the risk of becoming infected with or spreading COVID-19. Plan to celebrate or cheer from the safety of your own home, and not with large groups of people. Be mindful of the potential exposure of other fans or your family and friends.
- Outdoor gatherings in the cities of Ann Arbor and Ypsilanti are limited to no more than 25 people under [local health orders](#); we strongly encourage smaller groups. Indoor gatherings remain limited to 10 or fewer people not in the same household under [state health orders](#).

Gameday:

- Tailgating is prohibited in the lots surrounding the U-M stadium and strongly discouraged everywhere. There are no public ticket sales.
- There is currently a [stay-in-place order](#) for University of Michigan undergraduate students because of the steep increase in cases associated with U-M. Students and others are required to stay home and if they watch the game, to do so with their households.
 - Find virtual ways to connect, cheer and celebrate.
 - For students who will be going home for the Thanksgiving holiday, you can keep your family and friends at home safer by being as safe as possible now.
- While Eastern Michigan University is on the road for its first two football games on Nov. 4 and 11, it has a home game on Nov. 18. Tailgating on the EMU campus or in the parking lots around Rynearson Stadium is prohibited. There will be no guest admissions - only ticketed family members of participants will be permitted in the stadium.

Halloween:

- Halloween is not cancelled but should look different this year. Celebrate at home, virtually or using face coverings, distance, and frequent hand cleaning [to be as safe as possible](#).
 - If you decide to trick-or-treat or hand out treats, use face coverings and avoid gathering or close contact with others not in your household. Stay outdoors.
 - Find creative ways to keep distance, such as “handing” out candy from behind a 6-foot table or other marker.
 - Halloween activities are not exempt from the stay-in-place order for U-M students.
 - As with all events and activities, do not participate if you are having any symptoms or if you have been exposed to COVID-19 within the last 14 days.

Voting:

- Consider voting early or do so on election day as [safely as possible](#).
- Same-day registration is available in your city or township clerk office up until 8 p.m. on Election Day. Check your registration and find your clerk's office at Michigan.gov/Vote.

We strongly request and hope that all community members comply with local public health orders voluntarily, but these orders will be enforced if necessary. Failure to follow local public health orders are subject to misdemeanor charges, monetary penalties of \$500 to \$1000, and students may face student conduct violations.

We all wish for the best for our community now and always. We are at our best when we work together and value and protect one another to the best of our collective ability. We appreciate everyone's support and cooperation – while still celebrating, cheering, and voting as safely as possible.

Most sincerely,

Jimena Loveluck, MSW
Health Officer
Washtenaw County Health Department

Jason Morgan
Chair
Washtenaw County Board of Commissioners

Debbie Dingell
United States Congresswoman
Michigan's 12th District

James M. Smith, Ph.D.
President
Eastern Michigan University

Mandy Grewal, Ph.D.
Supervisor
Pittsfield Township

Lois Richardson
Mayor
City of Ypsilanti

Brenda Stumbo
Township Supervisor
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Christopher Taylor
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