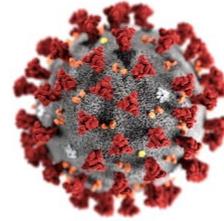




## Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update November 13, 2020



Today, there are 270,383 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 639 still under investigation. With 3,399 new cases reported today, this is the first time since April 29 (near the first wave's peak) that the State's seven-day average is more than 3,000. Union County has reported 23,463 cases in total, with Westfield reporting five new cases through the State reporting system since my last update on Tuesday (none on Wednesday, two on Thursday and three today).

As previously announced, I will be using Friday updates strictly for the purposes of reporting weekly data from the Department of Health, with my more expansive updates to continue every Tuesday going forward.

From November 6 - 12, there were five cases of COVID-19 reported in Westfield in our official case count. However, the total number of cases received by the Health Department for investigation over the same time period was 31, a number comparable to our peak in mid-April. As a reminder, this disparity is primarily due to the fact that rapid tests results are not able to be reported through the State system, so are not reflected in the numbers reported to our Police Chief, which is what I receive. Our Regional Health Department receives rapid test results from local health providers, which is why their numbers are higher.

This week, the Health Department reports that the ages of the 31 cases they received are as follows: 7, 11, 13 (three cases), 15, 16 (three cases), 20, 21, 22 (three cases), 23, 29 (two cases), 36, 38 (two cases), 42 (two cases), 50, 51, 55, 57, 58 (two cases), 59, 61, and 66.

Of these cases:

- 19 remain under investigation
- Four had no known exposure
- Three did not return the call
- Three had a known exposure
- Two were associated with household contacts

Remember, these 31 cases do not represent the full picture of the community spread we are experiencing. In fact, the Health Department is sorting through a significant number of new cases that they received just today. In addition, Regional Health Director Megan Avallone indicated that there are multiple other self-reported cases to her office from schools and day care centers that still require lab verification before they can be shared in her numbers, and I continue to hear from many other residents about additional cases that they know of that have not yet reached our reports. As I've noted in the past, there is often a reporting lag time from what you may hear about in your own personal networks until the cases are included in our updates.

Union County remains among the areas reporting the most new cases in New Jersey, and the Westfield Regional Health Department has recorded over 200 new cases in the eight towns they manage in this week alone. Statewide, cases have increased by 54% from the previous week and 265% from last month.

The hospitalization, ICU, and ventilator use numbers also continued to climb this week to levels not seen in more than four months.

As the State Health Commissioner said this week, this is a wake up call. My hope is that it is one we will take seriously. If we want to avert a crisis mode, have our schools stay open (and, in the case of Westfield High School, reopen), and see our businesses survive, we must all do our part to protect each other. This means remaining vigilant about safety protocols and fully cooperating with the Health Department in their contact tracing efforts. Their ability to act is only as good as the official information they're given, so please be forthcoming for the benefit of the community.

As you may have read, Addams Tavern has voluntarily closed on a temporary basis, out of an abundance of caution, after an employee recently tested positive. Based on the Health Department's initial investigation, it appears at this time that the employee was not working at the restaurant during the infectious period of the virus and has not returned to work since testing positive. The Health Department continues to monitor the situation.

Public health is everyone's responsibility, and I know that our community-minded residents care deeply about their neighbors, and about the survival of our local businesses. I am asking you to do all that you can to prevent this virus from spreading further while we can still make an impact on its trajectory. This means that Thanksgiving will look different this year, and I know that is a sacrifice for a holiday whose very essence is to gather with loved ones near and far -- especially after a very difficult year. Please celebrate wisely -- outdoors if you can, or with small groups inside well-ventilated spaces with proper distancing in place. It's not easy to make these changes, but it's incredibly important so that we can avoid going into the holiday season in a worse position -- not only in terms of health, but also economic vitality. Remember that our local businesses depend very heavily on these next six weeks, and any additional closures in this timeframe would be devastating to them. I am committed to doing all I can to help them weather these tough days and weeks ahead, but I need your help to prevent our numbers from getting worse. No one should go downtown without wearing a mask.

I know we all share the common goal of returning to normalcy, and I want to thank you for your ongoing resilience as we manage this second wave wisely as a community.