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Agency of Human Services Update to Orange and Washington Counties

Update on case growth in Central Vermont

- Approximately 900 cases have been reported in the last two weeks in Vermont (as of 11/17).
- Orange and Washington Counties accounted for nearly 40% of the COVID-19 cases in the state in the last two weeks.
- Orange County: 68 cases for an incidence rate of 23.5 per 10,000 people – twice the state incidence rate of 12.6.
- Washington County: 233 cases for an incidence rate of nearly 40 cases per 10,000 people – over three times the state rate.
- We are monitoring and investigating more than 50 active situations in Washington and Orange Counties.

Impact of increased case growth

Now more than ever, we need to do all we can to focus people's efforts on prevention and containment. Our focus needs to be on strengthening Vermonters' commitment and ability to adapt their behaviors – to protect themselves and prevent the spread of this highly contagious virus.

We know what the solutions are:

- (1) limit contacts and gatherings,
- (2) follow the travel and quarantine guidance, and
- (3) get tested when you've been to a social gathering, had symptoms of Covid-19, or had exposure to a person who is infected.

We need everybody's help to be successful.

Supportive Messaging (For communications and social media to your community)

1. We are all tired of this pandemic, but pandemic fatigue is contributing to the current rise in cases. Please keep social distancing, wearing masks and avoiding social gatherings. Now is the most important time to stay vigilant.
2. We can't control the nature of the virus. So, we must focus on the things we can control. Please lay low this holiday season and forgo all nonessential travel. If you do choose to travel, please be sure you follow our health guidance and quarantine when you return. Learn more on our website: healthvermont.gov/covid19-travel

3. It's likely we'll all find ourselves in situations where others' actions during COVID-19 make us feel uncomfortable — they're crowding us, not wearing a mask properly, or go to shake our hand. Some simple tips to help you speak up for staying safe [are available here](#).
4. Stay home when you are sick to keep illness from spreading to others. That means canceling any plans and not going to work. Let your friends, family or neighbors know you are not feeling well. Ask if they are willing to drop off food, prescription, or other things you need while you recover.

Executive Order – Talking Points and Summary

Unfortunately, we have a lot of individuals choosing to discount the entire data and evidenced-based approach of these latest steps, and many who are also wrongly attributing outbreaks to situations such as restaurant dining.

The actions taken by Governor Scott on November 13th are targeted explicitly at where Vermont's experience and data are clearly pointing us, including the counties and communities where heightened attention is needed immediately to prevent outbreaks and further spread.

This information comes directly from our epidemiology and contact tracing teams – they track cases every day and are the experts in understanding what is driving our current increases.

The data demonstrates, and the experience of contact tracing shows, that social gatherings – inside and outside – at homes, bars and social clubs, and among sports teams are currently driving outbreaks.

Since the start of October, 71% of outbreaks are tied to such social gatherings. One of the largest outbreaks we've had in Vermont traces back to an outdoor social gathering – a tailgate party, where everyone assumed they were safe just because they were outside in an open space, and so other protocols like distancing or consistent masking were not followed.

At this time, Vermont data does not point to restaurants, gyms or other close contact businesses driving outbreaks. Instead, the data suggests that the distancing requirements, capacity restrictions, masking and other safety protocols at these businesses are working.

The bottom line with this guidance is to stop multi-family social gatherings, especially events like parties. It is no coincidence cases are spiking in the weeks after Halloween, when too many adults had friends over to their homes. These social gatherings are driving case growth and outbreaks.

We understand how incredibly difficult and frustrating this is, but even after weeks of warnings about the threat these gatherings were posing, they have continued, and they are very clearly driving record case growth in Vermont. So, these steps are necessary to ensure we preserve our hospital capacity, which saves lives, and to protect our families and neighbors

With strong adherence to these measures, we can return to the case stability we've had since May and ease restrictions once again. Controlling COVID spread is in all our hands.

Measures announced by the Governor effective Saturday, November 14:

- **Public and Private Multi-Household Social Gatherings Prohibited**

Attendance at all public and private social gatherings, indoor and outdoor, including social gatherings incidental to ceremonies, holiday gatherings, parties and celebrations, shall be limited to participation with only members of a single household. Individuals who live alone may gather with members of their immediate family residing in a different household.

- **Restaurant Hours and Seating Limits**

Restaurants must close in-person dining at 10 p.m., but may provide curbside and delivery service after 10 p.m. For in-person dining, restaurants must seat only one household per table, in accordance with existing capacity limits and the new restriction on multi-household gatherings.

- **Closure of Bars and Social Clubs**

Bars and social clubs will be closed for in-person service until further notice. Curbside and delivery service is allowed.

- **Pausing Recreational Sports**

Youth and adult recreational sports activities, not related to Vermont Principals Association sanctioned school sports, are suspended until further notice.

- **Telework Requirements**

All businesses, non-profits and government entities shall reinstitute telework policies for all employees to the maximum extent possible. In person meetings are strongly discouraged and should be held by telephone or video conference whenever possible.

- **Contact Tracing and Testing Requirements**

All restaurants and other businesses hosting non-essential activities shall maintain a 30-day log of employee and guest names and contact information in case contact tracing is required by the Health Department. These individuals are consenting to be contacted by the Health Department Contact Tracing Team. Further, all Vermonters are directed to comply with requests made by the Contact Tracing Team. Finally, college students returning home in Vermont (from in-state and out-of-state schools) shall quarantine for 14 days or seven days with a negative COVID-19 test and testing is strongly encouraged.

Link to Executive Order:

<https://governor.vermont.gov/sites/scott/files/documents/ADDENDUM%208%20TO%20AMENDED%20AND%20RESTATED%20EXECUTIVE%20ORDER%2001-20.pdf>