

**For Immediate Release**

October 30, 2020

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**JOINT STATEMENT REGARDING COVID-19 CASES AND  
HOSPITALIZATIONS IN CLAYTON COUNTY**

**Clayton County, IA** – In the past seven days, Clayton County has had its largest increase in COVID-19 positive cases as well as hospitalizations. From the start of the pandemic, MercyOne Elkader Medical Center and Guttenberg Municipal Hospital & Clinics have been prepared for higher volumes, but have remained relatively stable. That environment changed this week. Now, our hospitals are experiencing the highest level of COVID-19 related hospitalizations since the start of the pandemic. Our hospitals are not yet at capacity and remain prepared to care for those in need.

However, we must band together and act now to lower the transmission rates so that we lower the risk of overwhelming our local health care systems. It is critical that we work together as a community to take the steps we know can reduce the spread of COVID-19. We continue to encourage community members to wear face coverings, maintain physical distancing, limit group gatherings and practice good hand hygiene and sanitizing to minimize the spread of the virus.

In addition, the timing of this new wave of COVID-19 cases in our community coincides with the annual influenza season. It is more important than ever to get your flu shot. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommend all people six months and older get flu vaccinations to protect themselves and others from getting influenza.

Hospitals and clinics are safe, and our providers are here to take care of you. It's important to keep routine appointments and seek treatment for acute medical conditions.

We need everyone to take this seriously to ***slow the spread***. Together, we can protect ourselves, our families and our neighbors.

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