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DATE: October 1, 2020

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For Immediate Release: Surge Leads to Changes in Contact Tracing

Marathon County has seen a steep surge of COVID-19 positive cases. We have reported 321 new positive COVID cases in the just the past 5 days. Our public health system is beyond capacity to respond to each person newly diagnosed with COVID -19 within 24 hours.

“We have reached a crucial point in this pandemic and are now using our crisis standards,” explains Joan Theurer, Health Officer, Marathon County Health Department, “We are no longer able to contact COVID-19 cases in a timely manner, nor are we able to have timely follow up with each close contact.” Information about isolation and quarantine is available on the Marathon County Health Department webpage.

The Marathon County Health Department will continue to follow up with individuals who test positive and go over isolation protocols, but the response may be delayed. While residents wait for a call or letter with isolation guidance, they are being asked to separate themselves from others and alert anyone who they may have had close contact within the two days prior to them becoming ill. Close contacts are defined as anyone who was within 6 feet of a positive case for at least 15 cumulative minutes, or had a direct contact (such as a handshake, hug, or sitting next to a person). Those that are identified as a close contact are asked to self-quarantine at home for a period of 14 days from their last contact with the infected person, monitor for symptoms, and limit contact with others as much as possible.

Due to the current level of COVID-19 activity in the community, it is the recommendation from the health department that everyone reduce the number of times they go to public places. The community is encouraged to continue to do what they need to do to protect themselves and others – wash your hands, watch your distance, wear a face covering and stay home if you're ill or were a contact of someone who was.

Cases are going up because we are not staying home. “We have community spread of disease and it will take action by all of us to slow this down,” continues Theurer, “By limiting the possible contact points, kids will be able to continue their learning in person, businesses will be able to remain open, and the livelihood of residents throughout Marathon County communities will be better protected.”

For more on the guidance provided for residents who test positive or are close contacts, visit our website at

<https://www.co.marathon.wi.us/Departments/HealthDepartment/COVID19.aspx>

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