

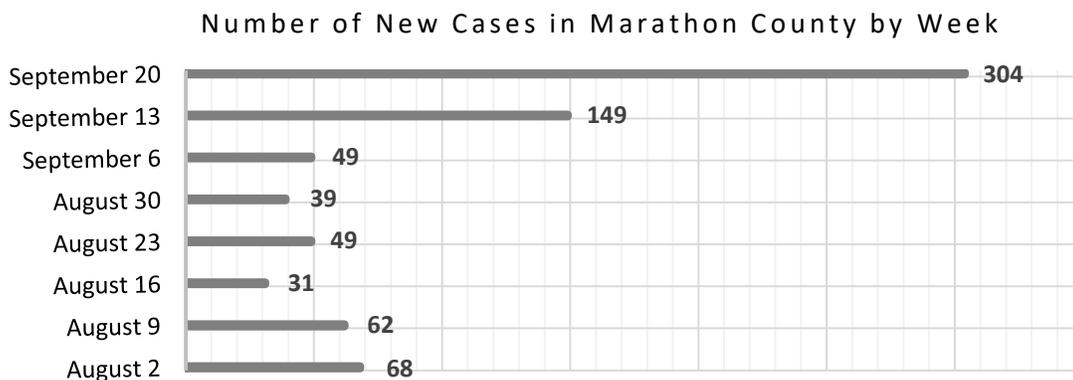
Marathon County Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)  
 Situational Report September 28, 2020 (10:00 AM)  
 Joan Theurer, Health Officer

What we Know

COVID-19 is a disease caused by a virus strain that began spreading in people in December 2019. Health experts are concerned because little is known about this new respiratory virus. On March 11, 2020 the COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

For the week of ending on September 26,

- [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) reports 7,009,216 cases in the U.S. and 203,180 deaths.
- [WI Department of Health Services](#) reports 113,645 cases in WI, 94,094 (82.8%) recovered, 7,041 (6.2%) ever hospitalized, and 1,281 (1.1%) deaths. The seven day average of the percent of positive is 17.2%. Total bed utilization in WI is 79%. Refer to [state summary date and county level data](#).
- [Marathon County](#), reports 1,312 cases, 867 (66.1%) recovered, 77 (5.9%) ever hospitalized, and 14 deaths (1.1%). 20,768 residents have tested negative for COVID-19. The fourteen day average of percent of positive is 8.6. Total bed utilization in the North Central region is 79%. Refer to [Marathon County COVID-19 Dashboard](#). 20-39 years old account for 37% of all cases, with 21% of all cases among 20-29 year olds. For hospitalizations, all residents have been 20 years or older. As one gets older, risk for severe illness from COVID-19 increases. Other factors that increase risk for severe illness are individuals with underlying medical conditions.



WI Department of Health Services has Marathon County’s [COVID-19 activity level](#) as high. The activity level is based on the number of new cases in the past two weeks and percent change from the previous to the current week.

COVID-19  
 Activity Level Marathon  
 County  
 on 9/23/2020

Low
Medium
High

Individuals, businesses, and other entities can reduce their risk for exposure by practicing physically distancing and avoid large gatherings, wear a face covering when indoors and in public, wash hands frequently, and stay home if sick.

Strategies being carried out to control the spread of COVID-19 in Marathon County and counties across Wisconsin include: harm reduction behaviors, surveillance activities, and “boxing the virus in”. Controlling the spread of COVID-19 will keep business and schools stay open.

**Harm reduction** behaviors are actions everyone can take to reduce their risk in being exposed to COVID-19:

- Watch your physical distance around others and avoid large gatherings,
- Wear a mask when you are not at home and indoor spaces or unable to physically distance,
- Wash your hands frequently, and
- Stay home when sick.

Wisconsinites are being asked to [wear face coverings](#) as a way to slow and prevent the spread of COVID-19 virus. Refer to [Marathon County COVID-19 Order #1](#) for additional actions individuals, families, businesses, and other entities can do to reduce the risk for COVID-19.

**Surveillance** is the collecting data to inform health departments how quickly the virus is spreading in communities, who is being infected, and the severity of the virus. Data is important for two reasons: to monitor for warning signs in a surge in cases, and to determine the level of risk for exposure in a county.

**“Boxing it in”** is a containment strategy to control the spread of the virus and suppress a surge in cases. To “Box in the virus”, health care providers and local health departments working to:

- Test every individual who has symptoms of COVID-19,
- Isolate individuals with COVID-19,
- Find everyone who had close contact to infected people, and
- Quarantine all close contacts.



The capacity of health departments to complete disease investigation and contact tracing is important to control the spread of COVID-19 in communities. With the significant surge of cases in the past two weeks, the department has implemented the WI Department of Health Services Contact Tracing Crisis Standards. The department is several days behind in contacting new cases; having schools and employers assist in notification of contacts. The monitoring of individuals in isolation and quarantine to assess their COVID-19 symptoms and ensure their basic needs are met is on hold.

## Major Developments

### U.S.

CDC updates for the week of September 20,

[CDC Overview of Testing for SARS-CoV-2 \(COVID\)](#)

[How COVID-19 Spreads](#)

[Holiday Celebrations](#)

[COVID-19 Forecasts: Hospitalizations](#)

[COVID-19 Science Update released: September 22, 2020](#)

[EARLY RELEASE: Changing Age Distribution of the COVID-19 Pandemic – United States, May-August 2020](#)

[Administration Announces \\$200 million from CDC to jurisdictions for COVID-19 Vaccine Preparedness](#)

[COVID-19 Forecasts: Cases](#)  
[SARS-CoV-2 Infection Among Hospitalized Pregnant Women: Reasons for Admission and Pregnancy Characteristics – Eight U.S. Health Care Centers, March 1-May 30, 2020](#)  
[COVID-19 Contact Tracing in Two Counties – North Carolina, June-July 2020](#)  
[Update: Characteristics of Health Care Personnel with COVID-19 – United States, February 12-July 15, 2020](#)  
[COVID-19 Science Update released: September 25, 2020](#)  
[Cases in the U.S.](#)

## Wisconsin

On September 18, WI Department of Health Services released [Some FoodShare Members Will Continue to Be Exempt from Work Requirements Starting October 1, 2020](#)

On September 21, WI Department of Health Services shared [Make It Safe, Keep It Fun Halloween 2020](#)

On September 22, Governor Evers [Declares a Public Health Emergency and Issues Face Coverings Order](#)

On September 22, WI Department of Health Services shared [Covering Wisconsin](#) website health insurance coverage resource for COVID-19 testing and treatment

On September 22, ABC 7 published [Chicago quarantine COVID-19 travel order: Wisconsin among several states added back on list](#)

On September 23, Governor Evers [Announces More Than \\$5 Million in CARES Act Funding for Broadband Expansion](#)

On September 23, the WI Department of Health Services released [Prevention and Control of Acute Respiratory Illness Outbreaks in Long-Term Care Facilities](#)

On September 24, Governor Evers [Announces \\$8.3 Million for COVID-19 Testing at Wisconsin's Private, Non-Profit, and Tribal Colleges and Universities](#)

On September 24, the WI Department of Health Services released [COVID-19 Health Alert #17: Important Considerations for Use of COVID-19 Antigen Tests](#)

On September 24, Wisconsin Rapids Tribune published [Gov. Evers warns of 'near-exponential' COVID-19 growth: more people in Wisconsin now hospitalized with virus than ever before](#)

On September 24, Wisconsin Public Radio published [Answering your questions on rent and eviction during COVID-19](#)

## **Actions Marathon County is Taking**

Local actions are guided by the [Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#), [WI Department of Health Services, WI Emergency Management](#), and the State of WI COVID-19 Emergency Operations Center (SEOC). The following pandemic functions are being carried out.

### Contact Tracing and Surveillance

- Implemented WI Department of Health Services Contact Tracing Crisis Standards given the number of cases has exceeded the health department's resources. Notification of close contacts is being carried out by schools and other entities.

- Participate in a state/local health department community testing advisory group to develop strategies to support Wisconsin's testing goals of 85,000 COVID-19 tests per week. Marathon County's target for September is 1,000 tests per week. Testing goals include;
  - o Respond to every employer, corrections, and congregate care outbreak,
  - o Test every nursing home resident and staff member,
  - o Establish community testing programs for symptomatic individuals in target communities, and
  - o Ensure everyone who is experiencing COVID-19 symptoms gets a test.

For the time period of September 9 thru 22, the percent positive was 8.6% for a total of 3,932 tests done during this two week time period.

- Further the development of a comprehensive and coordinated testing plan with area health care systems and the Portage Health & Human Services and Wood County Health Department; securing a dedicated testing site with the National Guard in greater Wausau area to provide surge capacity for health care systems
- Follow-up on 24 active facility outbreaks to ensure best practices are in place to control further spread, having 74 facility outbreaks since April 7
- Follow-up on 25,646 negative, positive, or contacts to cases reported from March 1- September 27, 2020, an increase of 1864 in the past week. Negative reports have been processed and imported into the state database thru September 21
- Oversee 26 contracted employees who are carrying out disease investigation and contact tracing activities or support tasks

#### Community Containment and Mitigation

- Isolate residents tested positive for COVID-19 and quarantine close contacts and assure they have a safe place to stay
- Maintain alternative isolate site plans for residents known or suspected to be infected with COVID-19 who cannot isolate safely at home in the Wausau and Marshfield area
- Field 455 calls from businesses or business related questions since March 25, having 3 calls during the week of September 20
- Field questions and provide recommendations to public/private schools regarding Department of Public Instruction (DPI) reopen guidance for the fall
- Promote the Wausau Area Chamber of Commerce [Consumer Safety Pledge](#) initiative
- Field questions and [complaints](#), provide education and resources to area businesses/organizations regarding Wisconsin's requirement for face coverings. Received 48 complaints the week of September 20 for a total of 694 since the on-line form was made available on August 13

#### Health Care System Response

- Monitor regional availability of health care resources for the COVID-19 response; refer to [daily snapshot hospital capabilities](#)
- Participate in the NCW-HERC (North Central Wisconsin Health Emergency Readiness Coalition) hospital updates to stay abreast of health care system capacity in regards to testing and caring for patients

- Participate in weekly NCW-HERC (North Central Wisconsin Health Emergency Readiness Coalition) Board of Directors calls to keep abreast of response plans for hospitals, clinics, long-term care facilities, EMS
- Carryout a county-wide system to respond to PPE requests from allocations received from the state
- Plan to host a National Guard community testing event on Friday, October 2 at Northcentral Technical College

### Communication

- Outreach efforts to populations:
  - o Hispanic – Translation of printed materials on *More than a Mask* and *Out & About*
  - o Hmong – Translation of printed materials on *More than a Mask*, *Out & About*, and Community Testing event on October 2
  - o Plain Clothes – Mailed guidance on COVID vs Flu, resources for community testing, recommendations for safe “Community Dinners”, and weekly data summary
- Provide accurate, timely and consistent information via [Marathon County Health Department website](#)
- Inform the community via [Marathon County Health Department Facebook](#)
  - o Posts: 27, Shares: 491, New Followers: 117 for week of September 20
  - o Posts: 722, Shares: 7,724, Followers: 4,866 since March 1
- Issued 3 press releases, conducted 10 interviews, and provided 2 media consults during the week of September 20; for a total of 37 press releases and 187 interviews/contact with the media since March 1
- Field 217 calls from the general public during the week of September 20

### What the Public Can Do

Watch your distance, stay 6 feet from others who don’t live in your household. When gathering with other people, limit the number of people. Avoid group gatherings where physical distancing is hard to maintain.

Wear a cloth face covering when indoors or in an enclosed space, other than at a private residence.

Stay home if sick.

Wash your hands frequently. Avoid touching your face. Cover your nose and mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Reach out for help if you’re feeling overwhelmed. It’s OK to ask for help. Call 211 to find a helping professional. Visit [Helping Wisconsin cope during COVID-19](#).

Seek credible sources of information from the [Centers for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#) and the [State of WI Department of Health Services](#) to learn more about COVID-19.