



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**NEWS RELEASE FOR
IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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Kalamazoo County Health Department Investigating One Confirmed Case of COVID-19 B.1.1.7. Variant *Public Health Nurses conducting contact tracing; exposed individuals to quarantine 14 days*

Kalamazoo, MI – Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is confirming the first case of a COVID-19 variant, B.1.1.7. has been identified in an adult over the age of 80 years old living in Kalamazoo County with no travel history. At this time, public health is conducting contact tracing and disease investigation to identify close contacts. All close contacts will be quarantined for 14 days and encouraged to get tested for COVID-19.

In Kalamazoo County, the variant was identified as part of a proactive submission of samples from our healthcare partners to the state public health laboratory. Without submission of the samples, the variant otherwise would not have been identified.

All viruses change over time; such changes in the virus that causes COVID-19 is known as a variant. The B.1.1.7 variant spreads more easily and quickly than other variants. B.1.1.7. is believed to be more contagious, but there has been no indication that it affects the clinical outcomes or disease severity compared to the SARS-CoV-2 virus that has been circulating across the United States for months. To date, the virus has been identified in at least 33 other states and jurisdictions in the U.S and two other counties in the State of Michigan, Washtenaw County and Wayne County. This is the only known case in Kalamazoo County at this time; however, it is possible that there are more that have not been identified.

“The identification of the B.1.1.7 variant in Kalamazoo County underscores the importance of our community wearing masks, social distancing, avoiding social gatherings, washing our hands, getting tested for COVID and getting vaccinated,” said Dr. William Nettleton, Medical Director of Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department.

Based on available evidence, current tests and vaccines for COVID-19 also work against this new variant. Protective actions that prevent the spread of COVID-19 will also prevent the spread of the new variant, B.1.1.7. People should:

- Get vaccinated for COVID-19 once eligible and vaccine supply is available.
- Wear a facemask around others.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others.
- Wash hands often.
- Ventilate indoor spaces.

Viruses constantly change through mutation, and new variants of a virus are expected to occur over time.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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Kalamazoo County health officials also encourage people to get tested frequently to slow the spread of any variant of the virus. Testing is widely available throughout Kalamazoo County.

People who are experiencing COVID-19 symptoms, such as a dry cough, fever, body aches, a sudden loss of smell or taste, or fatigue should get tested by calling their primary care provider or visiting one of the testing sites in Kalamazoo County. Testing site and COVID-19 information can be found at www.kalcounty.com/covid19.

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Kalamazoo County Government
Health & Community Services Department

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