



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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**NEWS RELEASE FOR
IMMEDIATE RELEASE**
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Matt Johnson and Lyndi Warner
Public Information Officers
pio@kalcounty.com

Three Additional COVID-19 B.1.1.7 Variant Cases Identified with No Links to Earlier Case

Kalamazoo, MI – Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department is confirming three additional cases of B.1.1.7. have been identified in Kalamazoo County. The three new cases are not linked to the first case in Kalamazoo County diagnosed with the COVID-19 variant. At this time, public health is conducting disease investigation and contact tracing to identify close contacts. All close contacts will be quarantined for 14 days and encouraged to get tested for COVID-19.

General details on those testing positive for the variant in Kalamazoo County include:

- Person over the age of 80 years old, no travel history
- Person in 20s with travel history
- Person in 50s no travel history
- Person in 30s, unknown travel history

All viruses change over time. The SARS-CoV-2 B.1.1.7 variant is thought to have emerged in the United Kingdom and has since been detected in many countries and states, including Michigan. The B.1.1.7 variant spreads more easily and is believed to be more contagious. 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.

“The three new cases identified of the COVID-19 variant B.1.1.7. without clear connection between each other tells us that community spread is likely occurring. This is not unexpected news. We know this variant is more contagious,” said Dr. William Nettleton, Medical Director of Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department. “It is important that we continue to wear masks, social distance, avoid social gatherings, wash our hands, get tested for COVID-19, and get vaccinated when it is available to you.”

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.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

311 E. Alcott St. | Kalamazoo, MI 49001

Phone: 269.373.5200 | www.kalcounty.com/hcs

- Wear a facemask around others.
- Stay 6 feet apart from others.
- Wash hands often.
- Ventilate indoor spaces.

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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Health & Community Services Department

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