



KALAMAZOO COUNTY GOVERNMENT

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NEWS RELEASE
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COVID-19 Announcements for Kalamazoo County

Kalamazoo, MI – The Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department (HCS) is announcing a new COVID-19 collection site starting on April 8. The site will only collect specimen from people who have been pre-screened and received an appointment by their provider.

The new collection site does not change the testing criteria a person must meet in order to obtain a test as outlined by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDHHS) Bureau of Laboratories. Per the emergency order, all testing must meet Priority 1 and Priority 2 criteria due to the limited resources available in the state. Priority 1 and 2 criteria include healthcare facility workers with symptoms, patients 65 years of age and older with symptoms, patients with underlying conditions with symptoms, and first responders with symptoms.

The process for obtaining a COVID-19 test has not changed. After a medical evaluation, a provider makes the decision whether to order a test. If needed, and depending upon laboratory criteria, the provider may order a specimen to be collected for COVID-19 testing.

At the collection site:

- Patients will not leave their vehicle for specimen collection.
- Appointments will be verified through proof of ID and appointment records.
- Clinical staff from WMed Health will collect the specimen while wearing the appropriate PPE.
- The specimen obtained will be sent to the MDHHS Bureau of Laboratories.

The new collection site located at the Health & Community Services Department is made possible through a collaborative effort with the Region 5 Medical Coalition and Western Michigan University Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine. Law enforcement will be present at the collection site for security purposes only.

The announcement of the new collection site is on the same day that HCS received notification of two deaths in Kalamazoo County attributed to COVID-19, bringing the total to five (5) deaths. Both individuals were older adults with underlying medical conditions.

HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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HCS continues to receive multiple requests about releasing additional information about COVID-19 cases, such as where positive cases live and where the deaths occurred. For confidentiality purposes, HCS will not be releasing additional information or publishing case counts for specific zip codes at this time. Privacy can be compromised by releasing **low counts** by zip code level. However, as case counts increase and patient privacy can be assured, HCS will consider publishing any relevant data to keep the public informed and healthy.

“We do not want to give the wrong impression about community spread. A zipcode could have no positive cases, thus making people feel a false sense of security that it is not in their area,” said Jim Rutherford, Kalamazoo County Health Officer. “We know COVID-19 is in our community. We know people not showing any symptoms can have the virus and inadvertently spread it. Releasing zip code information about positive cases of COVID-19 is not accounting for all those asymptomatic people.”

The best action people can take at this time is to adhere to the Governor’s “Stay Home, Stay Safe” Executive Order and avoid all gatherings of any size. If you must go out for essentials services, wear a cloth face covering, maintain six feet distance with others, and wash your hands.

HCS is committed to providing Kalamazoo County residents timely and relevant information that will help residents make informed decisions to protect their health. At this time positive case counts are not high enough to ensure patient privacy. HCS will continue to consider what additional information can be released.

Information about the COVID-19 is rapidly changing. For general questions about COVID-19, call the state hotline at 1-888-535-6136. The state hotline is open seven days a week from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. People may also call the Kalamazoo County Health & Community Services Department COVID-19 Call Center at 269-373-5200 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. For more information, visit www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html, www.michigan.gov/coronavirus, and www.kalcounty.com/hcs/covid19.php.

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Kalamazoo County Government
Health & Community Services Department

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