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Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Williams County Health District

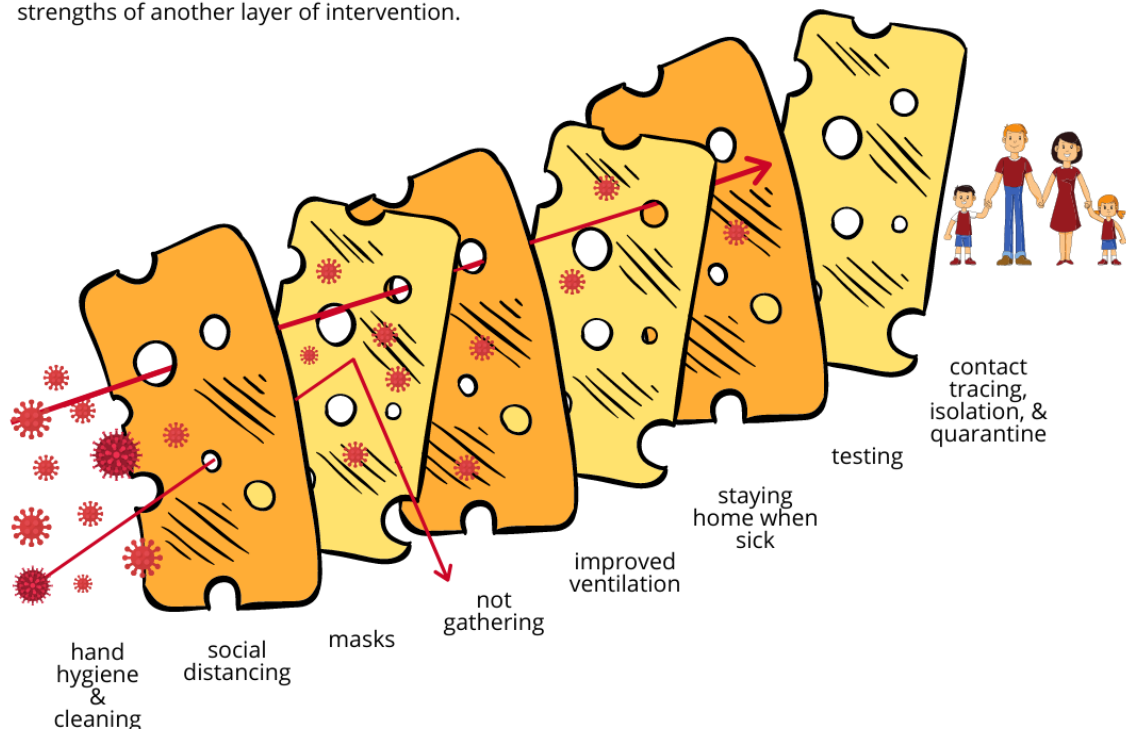## Community Talking Points
December 2, 2020

- COVID-19 cases continue to increase in Williams County. In the past 7 days (Nov. 24th-Dec. 1st), there have been 203 new cases, 8 hospitalizations, and 3 deaths. Williams County remains level 3 (red) on the Ohio Public Health Advisory System (OPHAS) and triggered 4 of the 7 indicators (New cases per capita, Non-congregate cases, Emergency department visits, and Outpatient visits) and high incidence.

- **To reduce the risk of COVID-19 infection in Williams County, a layered approach is necessary.** While each layer provides some protection, no single layer is perfect at preventing spread. Practicing social distancing, wearing a mask, good hand hygiene, contact tracing, and other preventative measures all work together to reduce the risk of infection and the spread of COVID-19. The picture on the following page illustrates the layers necessary to reduce the risk of infection.
  - **Masks** – Wearing masks properly (covering nose, chin, and mouth) is important for source control to decrease the quantity of respiratory droplets being released while breathing, talking, coughing, sneezing, or singing. Droplets can be inhaled or land in the mouth, nose, or eyes of a person nearby, which spreads the virus. Different types of masks provide different levels of protection if worn correctly.
    - Surgical masks reduce the spread of the virus by catching potentially infectious respiratory droplets from the wearer in the mask. They also provide some protection for the wearer by catching large droplets that may contain germs and filtering large particles from the air on the outside of the mask.
    - Cloth masks trap droplets that are released when the wearer talks, sneezes, or coughs. The risk of spreading the virus declines as more people wear masks. Many people do not show symptoms when they are infected so it is important to wear a mask even if you don't think you have COVID-19.
    - N95 masks are most effective because they can filter both large and small particles when inhaling and exhaling. N95 masks are used by healthcare providers and require a fit test to be worn effectively.
  - **Physical/Social Distancing** – COVID-19 spreads among people who are in close contact (within 6 ft) for a prolonged period of time (15 minutes or more over 24 hours to be considered a close contact). Since people can spread the virus before they know they are sick, it is important to stay at least 6 feet away from others, whether they show symptoms or not.
  - **Hand Hygiene, Cough Etiquette, Cleaning** – COVID-19 can live for hours or days on a surface, depending on various factors such as sunlight, humidity, and the type of surface. While COVID-19 is more likely to spread from contact with people with the virus, it can also spread by touching a surface or object that has the virus on it and then touching your own mouth, nose, or eyes. Cleaning often, washing your hands, and not touching your face helps limit opportunities to come in contact with contaminated surfaces.
  - **Limiting Gatherings** – Any gathering with people outside of your household increases your risk of being exposed to the virus. Virtual visits can be used to eliminate the risk of COVID-19 spread while visiting with loved ones.
    - Gathering indoors makes it more difficult for people to social distance, increases the number of high touch surfaces, and reduces airflow with limited ventilation as compared to the outdoors.
    - Limiting the number of people gathering, maintaining other protective behaviors such as wearing a mask and social distancing, and meeting outdoors are a layered approach to reduce risk.
  - **Improve Ventilation & Air Filtration** – The more people in an indoor environment, the greater the need for ventilation, or the amount of air coming indoors. Opening windows and adjusting the HVAC system to allow the maximum amount of air to enter your facility or home can reduce the virus recirculating in the air from people breathing (More information here: https://bit.ly/3mxcNZS). To improve filtration, use filters with greater MERV

(minimum efficiency reporting value) such as MERV ≥13 or HEPA (high-efficiency particulate air) filters (learn more: https://bit.ly/3fX33FD).

- o **Staying Home When Sick** – Monitoring yourself for symptoms (fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle or body aches, headache, new loss of taste or smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, or diarrhea) and staying home if you experience any of these symptoms can reduce the risk of COVID-19 spread. COVID-19 looks different for everyone. Some experience one mild symptom, some are affected by several symptoms, and some have no symptoms at all. By getting tested if you are symptomatic and staying home if you are sick, it limits the spread of the virus. Use the CDC's COVID-19 self-checker to see if you should stay home: https://bit.ly/39CKHZL.
- o **Testing** – Testing helps to identify COVID-19 cases and is recommended for people who have symptoms of COVID-19, have had close contact with a COVID-19 case, or people who have been referred by their healthcare provider. Not everyone needs to be tested, but testing helps to identify cases so they know they should stay home until they are no longer contagious. If you are tested, stay home until your results are back in case you are positive.
- o **Contact Tracing, Isolation, & Quarantining** – Contact tracing helps protect you, your family, and your community by letting people know they may have been exposed to COVID-19 and should monitor their health for signs and symptoms of COVID-19. It also helps to reduce the spread further by staying home (isolate) if a person tests positive for COVID-19. Close contacts (people within 6 ft for 15 mins or more over 24 hours) also need to stay home (quarantine) in case they develop COVID-19, too.

- With each layer added, the risk of getting or spreading COVID-19 declines. While some layers require personal responsibility, others require shared responsibility. It is important that everyone plays their part to reduce the spread in Williams County.

Swiss Cheese Model:
Using Layers of Prevention to Reduce COVID-19 Spread

The COVID-19 pandemic requires multiple layers of protection to keep our community safe. Each layer of prevention is not perfect, but as more layers are added the holes or weaknesses are reduced. When used consistently and collectively, the holes in any single layer of protection will be offset by the strengths of another layer of intervention.

hand hygiene & cleaning

social distancing

masks

not gathering

improved ventilation

staying home when sick

testing

contact tracing, isolation, & quarantine

Using multiple layers reduces the risk of COVID-19 spread in our community.

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