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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Surge in COVID-19 Cases Strains Local Public Health Resources** *Contact tracing prioritized*

**NICHOLASVILLE, Ky.** – The Jessamine County Health Department (JCHD) reported the County’s highest weekly number of confirmed novel coronavirus (COVID-19) cases last week (November 9 -15) at 180, which surpassed the previous record number of 145 the week prior. The recent surge in cases has placed a strain on public health resources needed to effectively contain the spread of this disease.

“The spike of cases in the community over the past few weeks has overwhelmed our resources,” said Randy Gooch, Executive Director of JCHD. “Even with our staff working overtime, it’s become a challenge to contact confirmed cases, let alone those they’ve potentially exposed.”

It is now time to optimize efficiency of case investigations and contact tracing by prioritizing resources. Therefore, JCHD has started to enlist the help of new COVID-19 cases to notify all their family, friends, coworkers, and others who may meet the exposure criteria for self-quarantining for 14 days. Formal contact tracing calls and quarantine orders will primarily be issued to those contacts that meet high risk exposure criteria for vulnerable populations, healthcare workers and first responders. The modified version of formal contact tracing will help alleviate the burden of resources required to maximize efficacy of disease mitigation efforts.

Rapidly identifying and isolating confirmed cases remains top priority for JCHD to mitigate the virus’s unrestrained spread. However, as cases continue to accelerate, there may be a delay between the time a person is notified of a positive result and a follow-up isolation order from the JCHD. Individuals should not wait on a call from the Health Department to begin isolating or quarantining at home.

All citizens should assume they are at heightened risk of COVID-19 exposure; thus, it is important for everyone to minimize their number of contacts and practice everyday prevention measures listed below:

- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Stay home from work, school, and community gatherings when you are sick.
- Avoid large gatherings and crowded places.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue or your elbow, not with your hands.
- Disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Wear a face mask in public.

JCHD is posting the latest information, guidance for the public and updating case counts daily at [www.jessaminehealth.org/covid19](http://www.jessaminehealth.org/covid19).