



**October 29, 2020**

### **COVID-19 Outbreak Associated with Liberty Church in Grand Ledge**

Barry-Eaton District Health Department (BEDHD) is confirming that there is a COVID-19 outbreak associated with Liberty Church, located in Grand Ledge, Eaton County. At this time, BEDHD is aware of at least 58 individuals confirmed to have COVID-19 associated with exposures at Liberty Church. Five of these individuals have been hospitalized, and four are currently receiving inpatient care, none in the ICU. The outbreak is still ongoing as cases were still being identified last week. The number of cases and hospitalizations may rise in the coming days due to further spread of COVID-19 and discovery of additional cases.

Some people associated with this outbreak have been reluctant to speak with the health department, and we request that community members please answer the phone and speak candidly with our investigators. This helps us to stop the chain of transmission to others. The identity of COVID-19 positive individuals are held confidential.

We believe most individuals were exposed at a worship service on October 11, 2020. Further exposures may have occurred at church events held the week before and after the worship service. Most cases associated with the outbreak began having symptoms the week of October 12<sup>th</sup>. Mask use was not required at church events, with many attendees choosing to not wear masks. We are encouraging individuals who were present at events at Liberty Church or came into contact with those who attend Liberty Church to pay special attention to any symptoms or changes in their health, and seek testing if COVID-19 symptoms arise.

COVID-19 can be a serious or fatal illness. Symptoms vary but can include fever, cough, loss of smell or taste, difficulty breathing/chest tightness, and fatigue. COVID-19 can be spread through contaminated surfaces or through the air. Church activities may spread COVID-19 as worshippers may engage in close physical contact or singing, which spreads more virus particles further into the air. As such, BEDHD is urging the community to continue to engage in safe practices at worship, in the community, and at home. These include frequent hand washing, social distancing from individuals living in different households, staying home when ill or quarantined, attending events virtually when possible, and wearing a mask, even when not required to do so. All of these are scientifically shown to reduce the spread of disease and save lives.

For more information on COVID-19, please visit BEDHD's website at <https://www.barryeatonhealth.org/coronavirus>. People who are feeling ill should contact their healthcare provider and consider COVID-19 testing. People who have additional questions should contact the health department that serves the county where they live.