

**For Immediate Release:
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Grand Traverse County Health Department relaunches digital COVID-19 survey

Since the beginning of March, the 7-day average of new COVID-19 cases has risen from 18 to 56, accounting for over 1,600 new cases in Grand Traverse County. With the surge, the resources used to complete case investigations on COVID-19 positive individuals both internally at the Grand Traverse County Health Department (GTCHD) and externally through the state contact tracing program continue to be severely stressed.

In order to both gather and share important information as quickly as possible, the GTCHD is re-launching a survey tool to conduct case investigations with individuals that receive positive COVID-19 test results. The survey had previously been utilized in December of 2020 after the second wave of the pandemic.

“Due to the current surge in cases, our communicable disease staff is having to utilize every resource we have to get contract tracing information and case investigations completed. It is important that if you receive an email or text that you fill out the survey,” said health officer, Wendy Hirschenberger. “Our staff will be reviewing completed surveys daily and reaching out to those that identify as a higher-risk referral. Based on the neighboring health department’s success, we are expecting a 40-50% return rate which would help our staff greatly.”

Gathering this information from those who test positive helps us to identify those who may spread the virus to others. This is also important in order to initiate isolation and quarantine as soon as possible because any delay to this process can result in unnecessary spread.

The tool, called Patient Education Genius (PEG), collects information from individuals who test positive for COVID-19 through a digital survey sent via text message or e-mail. The survey only asks for information that is allowable under the Public Health Code and Health Insurance Portability and Accountability (HIPAA) Privacy Act, such as demographics, symptoms, occupation, attendance at public events or gatherings, and people with whom they may have been in close contact. The survey *does not* gather any private information like social security numbers, personal passwords, or banking details.

Individuals aged 20-65 years will receive an electronic message asking them to fill out this confidential survey. Individuals under age 20 and older than 65 will continue to receive a phone call from the health department to complete case investigation. We will continue to prioritize case investigations and encourage anyone who has tested positive for COVID-19 to [self-isolate and notify anyone who may have been in close contact with you.](#)

Using the link received in a text or email, the patient will be able to view and locate other information regarding isolation and quarantine, as well as the local resources available to assist with meeting basic needs while doing so.

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Media Contact: Emmy Schumacher, eschumacher@gtcountymi.gov, 231-493-8376

www.gtchd.org