



Mayor Brindle's COVID-19 Update October 23, 2020



Today, there are 225,430 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in New Jersey to date, with another 432 still under investigation. Union County has reported 19,252 cases in total, with Westfield reporting eight new cases since my last update on Tuesday (three on Wednesday, two on Thursday, and three today) -- bringing our total to 422 since our first reported case in March.

As previously announced, I will be using Friday updates strictly for the purposes of reporting weekly data from the Department of Health, with my more expansive updates to continue every Tuesday going forward.

From October 16-22, there were 16 cases of COVID-19 reported in Westfield in our official case count. The Health Department's information shows that these cases were the following ages: 9, 15, 17, 18 (2 cases), 19, 20, 21, 35, 41 (2 cases), 47, 53, 58, 72, and 78.

Of these cases:

- Six were associated with household contacts
- Three had no known exposure
- Three had known exposure
- Two were unable to be reached
- One was associated with a college
- One remains under investigation

As I've mentioned previously, there continues to be a disparity between the official case count for the Town and the information received by the Health Department directly from health care providers and testing centers -- and that is because the State does not count rapid COVID tests in their official numbers yet. For example, only two of the six cases related to the Westfield High School closure are in our official count, even though they are identified through rapid testing via health care providers.

While our official number of cases was 16 this week, the total number of cases received by the Health Department for investigation was 28. This reiterates that we should assume the numbers are higher in actuality than we are able to officially report, and that disparity will continue to grow as rapid testing becomes more readily available. As we continue to provide any information we receive, we are also exploring the best way forward to report data in a way that is most helpful to the community.

On another note, as you may know, the CDC changed their criteria for close contact this week to a more stringent definition. They had previously defined a close contact as someone who spent at least 15 consecutive minutes within six feet of a confirmed case. The updated guidance, which health departments rely on to conduct contact tracing, now defines a close contact as someone who was within six feet of an infected individual for a total of 15 minutes or more over a 24-hour period. The New Jersey Department of Health has changed their definition to align with this change, effective immediately.

With the closure of the high school and all of its extracurricular activities, I know these setbacks are very difficult -- especially for the kids in the community. The best way forward is to continue to stay diligent by limiting indoor contact outside of your family, and by keeping best practices in place as the numbers continue to increase both statewide and locally.

Thanks, as always, for doing your part.