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For Immediate Release

MCHD to hold free community COVID testing on Friday at WVU Rec Center

MORGANTOWN, WV (Sept. 16, 2020) — In order to get a better picture of the number of individuals with COVID-19 in Monongalia County, additional free community testing conducted by Monongalia County Health Department will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Friday, Sept. 18, at the WVU Rec Center.

“Because up to 40% of people who have COVID-19 do not display symptoms, we encourage anyone who believes they should be tested to come out on Friday,” said Dr. Lee B. Smith, MCHD executive director and county health officer. “We really need to get a handle on this virus in our county.”

This will be the fifth free day of community testing held by MCHD in the past four months. The most recent one was Sunday, Sept 13 at Mylan Park. On that day, 557 individuals were tested and so far, 11 have tested positive.

Unlike previous testing sites, this one will be walk-in only, instead of primarily drive-through. Everyone should wear a mask and practice social distancing. Individuals will undergo nasal swab tests that will be processed by Q-Labs.

“The reason free testing is so important is that we need to understand clearly how much COVID exists in Monongalia County,” Dr. Smith said. “People can be either symptomatic or asymptomatic and we want to break the chain of infection. Those who test positive can then self-isolate and help stop the spread.”

COVID-19 symptoms can include fever or chills, cough, shortness of breath or difficulty breathing, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, sore throat, new loss of taste and/or smell and congestion or runny nose.

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This testing is being done in conjunction with the West Virginia National Guard and West Virginia University. For the time being, free testing will take place more frequently until Monongalia County's numbers improve.

Monongalia County's status on the state's County Alert System went into the red, the highest category, last week, which mandates more testing. The red alert means that the county has 25-plus positive COVID-19 cases per 100,000 residents.

The map, along with a vast amount of state COVID-19 statistics, can be viewed at the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources COVID-19 dashboard, at dhr.wv.gov/COVID-19.

Nationwide, West Virginia is at the top of the list of states in which COVID-19 is spreading fastest with the highest Rt number. The Rt number represents the average number of people who become infected by an infectious person. West Virginia was No. 1 last week but Delaware, North Dakota and Wisconsin have since moved slightly ahead. That data can be viewed at <https://rt.live>.

On Wednesday, Monongalia County had a total of 1,768 cases since the beginning of the pandemic six months ago. Monongalia County only had 162 COVID-19 cases as of June 30, but surges in July and again this month have made those numbers spike.

In addition to testing, people should still wear masks, social distance and wash hands frequently and thoroughly in order to slow the spread.

“We are still going in the wrong direction with these numbers,” Dr. Smith said. “People need to make good decisions in order to not only protect themselves and their families, but also the community.”

For up-to-date information on health and wellness in Monongalia County, check out monchd.org and follow the health department on Facebook and Twitter @WVMCHD and on Instagram at #wvmchd. COVID-19 information can be found under the “Preparedness” tab.