



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR MIKE DUNLEAVY

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August 18, 2021

Dear honorable Alaska mayors, Tribal leaders and municipal administrators:

Thank you for your tireless efforts this past year and a half. The Alaska Department of Health and Social Services is here to support you and your constituents to protect and promote the health and well-being of Alaskans. It is our goal to ensure communities have the COVID-19 data they need to make informed decisions and help communicate community risk levels. We have and will continue to provide as much current data as possible to inform personal, organizational and community decision making.

We have been hearing from many of you about the need for more data and we want to assure you we are continuing to improve our COVID-19 response to meet local needs. This has been hampered by the cyberattack on our website, but we are contacting you today to make sure you have a list of the many data resources that remain available.

Current public COVID-19 data resources

- **Alaska COVID-19 Data Information Hub (Data Hub):** The dashboards located on the COVID-19 Data Hub are now being updated usually by noon Monday-Friday instead of Mon/Wed/Fri. We recently updated case count alert levels to better match the CDC alerts and with more granular data, and we've also improved the vaccine data to show more detailed rates of vaccination. Almost every data point on the hub can now be selected down to the borough and census area, and community level data can always be extracted in the Summary Tables. The data hub can be accessed [here](#) (best supported by Chrome, Firefox, Safari or Edge).
- **COVID-19 Website:** Even though the DHSS website remains partially unavailable, many pages are now back online. Access our COVID-19 website [here](#).
- **COVID-19 Presentations and Reports:** The COVID-19 data hub presentations and reports [archive](#) is another location to find recent presentations and reports. Most publications mentioned here can be found in this archive.
- **COVID-19 Severe Outcomes Update:** The most current monthly report summarizing hospitalizations and vaccine breakthroughs can be found [here](#).
- **Alaska COVID-19 Summary:** We have resumed Monday-Friday data summary emails while cases are high. You can receive them via email by subscribing to them [here](#). This same information is also posted Monday-Friday on the [DHSS Facebook page](#) and [Twitter](#).

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- **COVID-19 Weekly Case Update:** Weekly updates summarizing Alaska's COVID-19 trends are published weekly, usually on Wednesdays, and can be emailed to you by subscribing [here](#). These are also posted weekly on the [DHSS Facebook page](#), [Twitter](#) and in the Data Hub presentations and reports [archive](#).
- **COVID-19 Alaska Clinical Update:** These summary updates of recent data and research for health care providers are typically published weekly or biweekly. Subscribe [here](#). These are also posted weekly in the Data Hub presentations and reports [archive](#).
- **DHSS ECHO Videoconferences:** Many public meetings are held each week to support health care providers and the public. We encourage you to send community members who have questions to these ECHOs. A full list can be found [here](#). We also do pop-up ECHO videoconferences as needs arise and are currently hosting an evening series for parents in partnership with school districts and the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development on COVID-19 mitigation strategies.

Learn more at the next local government ECHO

Given the numerous data resources and questions we have been receiving, the next **Local Government Public Health Analysis ECHO** today, Wednesday, August 18, at 3 p.m., will provide a more in-depth training on how to use the data hub. We want to hear your data requests and will have our data team available to answer any data questions. Please register to attend that ECHO [here](#).

When data requests made to local Public Health Nursing match what is publicly available on the data hub, municipalities will be referred to those resources with assistance on how to find them. While there may at times be a slight lag, the data hub is robust and offers communities many ways to review local data, support communication and develop mitigation strategies.

Case surge and staff limitations

The rate of spread and infection in Alaska from the delta variant has caused significant strain on the Division of Public Health's ability to process lab results and respond with contact tracing in a timely fashion. This includes importing data to our data hub. DHSS is recalling temporary staff to support the increased data entry and contact tracing staffing needs. To streamline work as much as possible, we will direct communities and individuals to these resources as much as possible. However, if there are additional data requests for data not found on the data hub, we will kindly ask you fill out a data request form. The form is currently being developed and will be available soon. We will share the form link with you as soon as it becomes available.

The Division of Public Health contact tracing workforce and local public health nurses will continue to coordinate closely with local leaders and other public health officials if an investigation indicates the infectious period occurred within a high-risk setting, although the notifications may be delayed based on case counts within a given week. Public Health Nursing may share information as allowed under [AAC 27.903](#) as needed to

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protect public health. Many communities have been receiving community-level data directly from their local public health nurses regarding acquisition of infection and the percentage of cases outreached by a contact tracer. We will continue to provide this data as long as staffing capacity allows, but this assistance may be limited given increasing demands on our staff due to the surge in cases.

In order to keep communities, schools and the economy open and safe, we encourage local leadership to implement [CDC's COVID-19 guidance recommendations](#). The Division of Public Health remains available to provide guidance and suggestions to help you take action on these recommendations.

Thank you for all you do!

We are so incredibly grateful for your partnership and leadership through these challenging times and look forward to continuing to improve our response to meet your local needs.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AZink', with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Dr. Anne Zink, MD, FAACP

Chief Medical Officer, Alaska Department of Health and Social Services