

COVID-19 UPDATE JULY 24, 2020

This week the US reached the 4 million mark on diagnosed COVID-19 cases. SC continues to have high numbers of cases and deaths (1,538 cases and 49 deaths on Thursday). Hospitalizations have declined slightly at Prisma, while AnMed continues with record occupation of regular and ICU beds with COVID patients. Greenville County continues to be a 'hot spot' as well as Charleston

Municipalities continue to enact their own mask mandates in the absence of a state-wide ordinance. Dr. Linda Bell, the director of SC DHEC, in an interview on Thursday stated her support of a state-wide mask mandate, and President Trump has recently encouraged mask use and worn one himself in public. A recent survey shows roughly 3/4 of Americans now favor a requirement for mask-wearing in public (89% of Democrats and 58% of Republicans.)

Individual schools and school systems (public schools as well as colleges) continue to develop their back-to-school plans, with most offering either completely virtual classes initially, or a combination of in-person and virtual learning. The CDC on Thursday released new guidelines for return to school which more strongly encourage in-person school attendance than the previous guidelines, but still recommend that local officials consider closing schools, or keeping them closed, if there is substantial, uncontrolled transmission of the virus.

With the continued rise in cases, and therefore testing requests, some parts of the state are experiencing marked delays in test result turn-around times, making it difficult to obtain the needed negative results for return to work after illness or exposure. On Wednesday July 22, the CDC released symptom-based guidelines, recommending that most persons with COVID-19 (those with mild to moderate symptoms) should isolate 10 days (instead of 14) after symptom onset, and until resolution of fever for 24 hours without the use of fever-reducing medications. For persons who never develop symptoms, isolation can be discontinued 10 days after the date of the first positive test. Testing for discontinuation of isolation is no longer recommended except in immunocompromised individuals, or to discontinue isolation sooner than the symptom-based strategy would allow. Isolation of those who become severely ill with COVID may require up to 20 days of isolation. <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/duration-isolation.html>