

## COVID UPDATE August 28, 2020

In the upstate, cases have declined markedly. On Thursday, Anderson led with 15 new cases, followed by Greenville at 9, Spartanburg at 6, Pickens at 2, and Oconee at 0 new cases. Overall the state had 424 new cases and 42 deaths that day.

Cases continue trending down slightly in S.C. and the average of the percent positive tests in the past 28 days has gone from just below 20% to just above 8%, but continues to fluctuate. The week ending Aug 22, we had 5,247 new cases state wide, down from 8,386 new cases two weeks before and only half what it was at our peak in mid-July. There has been some concern that this decline was due to less testing, but deaths and hospitalizations have declined slightly as well so hopefully it is real improvement.

Several universities opted not to open full time as originally planned, including Clemson, which announced last week just before classes were to begin that learning would be all virtual for at least the first 4 weeks. All on campus housed students and employees were required to have a negative COVID test in the previous 5 days. However, there are 15,000 off campus students who have not been tested. The plan is to randomly test 600 of them each week.

USC opened in person classes last week, but has been approved for a rapid turn-around saliva test which may make testing and contact tracing more feasible, if the numbers of positives are not too great. Beginning Wednesday Aug. 19, the SAFE test (Saliva Assay Free Expedited) was offered to all faculty, students and staff free of charge and gives results within 24 hours. Thousands of tests can be performed daily. The test was developed by the USC College of Pharmacy.

An American Academy of Pediatrics report last week stated that 15,295 children in SC under age 20 have had COVID, which is just under 1% of the total S.C. population under age 20, and represents 15% of confirmed COVID cases. It has become evident that children have milder illness but can shed large quantities of virus when infected, which is of course a concern as public schools re-open. The CDC has reported that hospitalizations for children have been increasing, and that the percentage of hospitalized children who require ICU care is the same for children as adults (about 30%.)

Anderson County Council voted this week not to mandate masks despite evidence that they have been highly effective at prevention in those locations that did implement them.

A new federal guidance added teachers to the list of 'essential infrastructure' workers, exempting them from quarantine in case of COVID exposure. S.C. had already given that designation to teachers, but it will be up to individual school boards to decide on the quarantine rules.

The U.S. saw 215,000 more deaths than usual in the first seven months of 2020, and most of that excess mortality is attributed, either directly or indirectly, to COVID-19. The disparity in the death increases for people of color was noted, averaging 30% for Black, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American individuals, and 9% for White.

The fourteenth COVID death of a prison inmate occurred in SC this week.

Abbott Labs received emergency use authorization from the FDA for a nasal swab antigen test that gives results in 15 minutes and costs \$5. The company plans to ship millions of tests in September and have 50 million ready by October. It is 97% accurate and intended for use in the first 7 days of symptoms.

Overall in the U.S., cases are declining, but some states, particularly in the Midwest, set case records this week, including Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, Hawaii and Guam

The US is now at more than 5.8 million cases and over 180,000 deaths.