



October 28, 2020

## **Utah Public Health Association Calls for Stricter Public Health Measures as COVID-19 Cases Surge**

***Organization Commends Governor Herbert for Implementing COVID-19 Transmission Index and Recommends Further Action in a Time of Crisis***

The Utah Public Health Association (UPHA) released a statement today in support of Utah's transition to the new COVID-19 Transmission Index and is calling for the immediate adoption of additional public health measures to keep Utahns safe. UPHA represents over 200 public health workers across the state and is a leader in promoting public health practice and advocating for sound public health policy. UPHA members represent professionals in health care, epidemiology, health education and promotion, COVID-19 contact tracing and community health.

The [Index](#), launched on October 15, 2020, uses public health metrics to determine the transmission levels in which counties are placed. This data driven approach supports public health agencies and officials and seeks to remove political influence on these decisions. As of October 27th, 21 of the 29 counties in Utah were classified as high transmission areas and require heightened mask requirements and social gathering restrictions. UPHA applauds this important step in putting public health data at the forefront of decision making, but more needs to be done.

Hospital ICUs are near capacity, the healthcare and public health workforces are exhausted, and nearly 600 of our fellow Utahns have died. A recent UPHA membership survey found that public health workers are frustrated by a lack of support from political leaders as many Utahns disregard safety protocols. One survey respondent said, "Everyone is burnt out with no relief in sight."

UPHA recommends the following additional public measures if Utah is to reverse the surge in cases. UPHA stands with public health officials and calls upon state leaders to immediately:

- Deliver a unified 'mask-up and get tested' message from *all* elected leaders
- Develop and expand a targeted, cultural-competent public information campaign promoting the new Transmission Index as still too many Utahns do not know about the new health guidance
- Encourage the public's cooperation with contact tracing activities
- Expand symptomatic/asymptomatic testing in geographic areas with high transmission rates
- Include public health officials to enforce Transmission Index requirements

Utah's public health workforce is on the front lines of this crisis. UPHA urges the public to wear a mask and physically distance with individuals outside their immediate household. In addition, UPHA urges the public to get tested if experiencing a COVID-19 related symptom or if they have been exposed to the disease.

“It is critical that Utahns wear masks, physically distance themselves in all gatherings and get tested, so that we can get through this crisis together,” said Paul Wightman, Executive Director of UPHA. “Let’s not blame or shame individuals. Instead, let’s adopt and enforce sound, evidence-based public policies to keep all Utahns safe and healthy.”

**Utah Public Health Association**

P.O. Box 9387, Millcreek, Utah 84109

(801) 849-1708 | [www.upta.org](http://www.upta.org)