



## MEDIA RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **While Healthcare and Long-Term Care Wait for Vaccine, Pierce County Public Health Extends Mass Gathering Limitations**

Pierce County Public Health (PCPH) released an updated advisory continuing the limits on the size of indoor public gatherings. The advisory limits public gatherings to no more than 25% of a space's maximum capacity or no more than one person per 113 square feet in a space without defined occupancy limits. There are exemptions for schools, childcare, healthcare, houses of worship, and other settings that are outlined in the advisory found [here](#). The advisory was originally scheduled to end at the end of December, but has now been extended to January 31, 2021.

Pierce County and the rest of Wisconsin have seen a promising decrease in new cases and positivity rates over the last few weeks. However, Pierce County is still in a worrisome position. The 7-day average of new cases remains approximately three times the critical threshold rate established by the Harvard Global Health Institute. Pierce County has a higher rate of new cases than the state of Wisconsin or the Twin Cities metro. Schools are stressed, as cases among K-12 staff and students increased fourfold from October to December. Outbreaks in long-term care facilities remain. While vaccines provide hope, they are not yet available locally.

AZ Snyder, Health Officer/Public Health Director said, "Two vaccines are now ready under emergency use authorization. No vaccines have been distributed to Pierce County healthcare or long-term care facilities yet, but we expect this will occur in January. Once we get those vaccines to our most vulnerable residents and those that care for them, we will begin loosening restrictions on high-risk activities, like indoor gatherings."

"With the support of the community, we have not needed to take formal enforcement actions on any facility under our mass gathering advisory. Even though it hurts, Pierce County businesses are doing what they need to in order to protect their staff, customers and communities. Our local businesses are in a tough spot and haven't gotten the help they need from the state and federal government to weather this crisis. We know that what we are asking people to do is hard, but we need vaccines available locally before we can move forward safely," said Snyder.

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PCPH also continues to urge the community to limit private gatherings. Places or events that are not open to the public are excluded from the new advisory outlining public gathering restrictions (e.g. an invitation-only wedding); however, COVID-19 can spread at any gathering. Snyder said “We can all save lives in our own community by choosing to avoid gatherings with extended family over the holidays. I am pleading with people to be safe over Christmas so we can have a brighter 2021.”



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