



East Central

District Health Department

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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New COVID-19 Variant Detected in ECDHD Jurisdiction and Across State

[Columbus]—One of the first known cases of the California variant of COVID-19, known as B.1.429, has been identified and confirmed in the East Central District Health Department (ECDHD) jurisdiction. A total of 13 cases, from four different health jurisdictions, have been confirmed in Nebraska, including nine in Douglas County, two in Public Health Solutions (comprised of Fillmore, Gage, Jefferson, Saline and Thayer counties), one in Lancaster County, and the one in the ECDHD jurisdiction (Boone, Colfax, Nance, and Platte counties).

Less is known about B.1.429 than other variants. It was first identified in California, and was discovered more recently than other variant strains of COVID-19. Similar to other variants, it has been spreading throughout the United States and is likely more contagious. Testing platforms like Test Nebraska and others will still produce a “positive” result for the B.1.429 variant (and other variants). It is expected that vaccinations will remain effective. Nebraskans are encouraged to register now for the vaccine at vaccinate.ne.gov and to get the vaccine when it is available to them.

As researchers learn more about B.1.429, it remains as important as ever to continue masking, distancing, and avoiding the three C’s: Crowded Places, Close Contact, and Confined Spaces. If you believe you have been exposed to COVID-19, or develop symptoms, schedule a free test at <https://www.testnebraska.com/en>.

Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services (NE DHHS) and the Nebraska Public Health Laboratory (NPHL) have been working to increase sequencing capabilities within the state. Higher volumes of in-state sequencing began in January and NPHL currently has capacity to sequence more than 100 specimens per week.

Nebraska’s top goal remains protecting hospital capacity. The efforts undertaken by the state over the course of the emergency have resulted in significantly lower hospitalizations as compared to the last several months.

As of February 25, 2021, over 222,000 Nebraskans have registered to receive the vaccine on the State’s portal at

contact information, date of birth and answer health questions used to help determine priority group eligibility. Any information entered is strictly confidential and used solely for this purpose. Friends, family and caregivers are encouraged to assist others with vaccine sign-up if needed. The registration portal is available in English and Spanish. The DHHS Information line can assist those with limited technology, language or Internet access, and is available by calling [531-249-1873](tel:531-249-1873) or [833-998-2275](tel:833-998-2275).

Additional questions about the information contained in this press release should be directed to Dr. Charles (Chuck) Sepers, Chief Public Health Officer, ECDHD, at (402) 942-3585.

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