



## **Elkhart County Health Officer Issues New Public Health Order on COVID-19 Mitigation Directives**

**Elkhart County, Indiana** (April 5, 2021) – Following Governor’s Holcomb’s modification of the statewide COVID-19 mitigation directives, the Elkhart County Health Officer worked with the State Department of Health, local hospitals, and infectious disease specialists to evaluate what mitigation measures are necessary to bring Elkhart County to advisory level blue. Over the last month, Elkhart County has tripled its positive cases from a 7-day moving average of 19 per day to 58 per day. Similarly, over the course of the last month, the positivity rate 7-day moving average has gone from a low of 4.5% up to 7.5%. Additionally, the hospitalization census and hospital admissions in Elkhart County are again on the rise. “It is my goal to help Elkhart County control the spread of the virus to allow us to keep our kids in school, keep our hospitals accessible, and keep our businesses open,” stated Elkhart County Health Officer, Dr. Bethany A. Wait.

While individuals 40 and over have been given time to secure a COVID-19 vaccine, Indiana just opened registration to individuals 16 years of age and older on March 31, 2021. Before that, individuals aged 30 to 39 were first given a chance to register for a COVID-19 vaccination only two days earlier on March 29, 2021. Dr. Wait noted, “I believe that a certain level of mitigation must be required until individuals 16 years of age and older have an opportunity to obtain a COVID-19 vaccine.” Dr. Wait added, “Obtaining the COVID-19 vaccine is a personal choice, but I want everyone to have an opportunity to make that choice.”

In pursuit of these goals, Dr. Wait executed Public Health Order 2021-01, which goes into effect April 6, 2021, and remains in effect until May 14, 2021. This new Public Health Order replaces the previous COVID-19 public health orders. Under 2021-01, face coverings are still required, social gatherings and events are subject to capacity limits, and other mitigation measures are strongly recommended. Also as a part of 2021-01, Dr. Wait reminds the public that, in addition to wearing a face covering and complying with social gathering and event capacity limits, they must continue follow the additional mitigation measures implemented by individual businesses and entities.

Goshen Health Hospital and Elkhart General Hospital support these additional measures. In fact, Goshen Health Hospital issued a formal written request to Dr. Wait asking that a new public health order be issued in order to help reduce the strain that increased COVID-19 hospitalizations have on our community and Elkhart General Hospital issued a formal letter in support. “I am grateful for the individuals and businesses who are willing to continue to wear their masks, socially distance, and limit their social gathering and event capacities, as together we can win the battle against COVID-19 while continuing to be a thriving, healthy community,” stated Dr. Wait.