



Dickinson-Iron District Health Department

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News Release

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Immediate Release

COVID-19 B1.351 Variant Detected in Dickinson County

Kingsford, MI- April 14, 2021- The Dickinson-Iron District Health Department was notified late last night that genetic testing has confirmed that the B1.351 variant of the virus that causes COVID-19 was detected in a positive case within Dickinson County. This variant, commonly referred to as the South African Variant, is concerning because it is associated with increased transmissibility. Compared to the standard SARS-CoV- 2 virus, the B.1.351 variant is approximately 50 percent more transmissible, leading to faster spread of the virus and potentially increasing numbers of cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. Ruth Manier, Director of Community Health Services states, “the presence of this particular variant is alarming because it is less responsive to our known treatment options, like monoclonal antibody treatments. There are concerns about immunity protection from vaccinations and natural immunity following a COVID infection, this could possibly mean an increase in reinfections for those who have already experienced a COVID infection.”

Additional public health efforts are required once the variant has been identified, to slow the spread within the community. Manier adds, “This is our second variant identified in our community within the last two weeks. Our concerns are for the health, safety, and wellbeing of our community. We are noticing that cases being identified are in a younger population. It is important to remember that we do not understand what the long-term consequences may be of experiencing an infection.”

To protect our community, we all must continue working together to make an effort to get vaccinated and adhere to social distancing, mask-use, hand hygiene, avoiding large social gatherings, and other mitigation strategies. Dickinson-Iron District Health Department has extended vaccine eligibility to anyone over the age of 16. Adults over the age of 18 are eligible to schedule an appointment. Parents who are interested in scheduling an appointment for their 16- and 17-year-old children should call DIDHD during normal business hours. For more information on the COVID, please visit didhd.org, michigan.gov/coronavirus, or michigan.gov/COVIDVaccine.

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