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NEWS RELEASE: Ottawa County COVID-19 case increase among young adults prompts public health officials to issue a 'Staying in Place' order for GVSU Allendale

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September 16, 2020

NEWS RELEASE: Ottawa County COVID-19 case increase among young adults prompts public health officials to issue a 'Staying in Place' order

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Allendale Township GVSU COVID-19 case surge prompts 'Staying in Place' order

Ottawa County, Mich. – The State of Michigan and Ottawa County are under states of emergency because of the COVID-19 pandemic. COVID-19 poses an imminent danger to public health. The public health officer of the Ottawa County Department of Public Health (OCDPH) has issued an order requiring all Grand Valley State University (GVSU) students living in on-campus housing or living in off-campus housing in Allendale Township, Michigan, to remain in their designated residence at all times for 14 days beginning September 17, 2020, at 12:01 a.m. and ending October 1, 2020, 11:59 p.m. Students may not return to their home address unless for an emergency.

Since August 23, 2020, there have been more than 600 cases of COVID-19 in the student population living on or near the GVSU campus in Allendale Township, Michigan. Case rates per million have continued to rise, indicating disease spread among GVSU students and rates have exceeded maximum indicator thresholds for risk to the community. The majority of cases are among off-campus students and appear to be driven by congregate living and congregate gathering. GVSU cases have consistently reported a lower number of contacts, compared to non-GVSU cases in Ottawa County. During OCDPH's case investigation, many students report having no contacts or refuse to disclose contacts.

“Control of the COVID-19 pandemic is necessary to protect the health of Ottawa County communities,” said Lisa Stefanovsky, OCDPH public health officer. “Based on epidemiological data and the expertise of public health officials, the increased numbers of GVSU cases may adversely impact other communities, services and businesses in the county. This could include the Ottawa County Court system and K-12 education based on the state’s mandated thresholds for in-person interactions. GVSU has worked collaboratively with us in mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and we truly appreciate their support as we work through this.”

For this order, staying in place means no gatherings or group activities outside the listed exceptions below are allowed.

Students will be allowed to:

- Attend in-person classes, including labs and physical education classes with strict adherence to preventive measures.
- Leave their room or residence to pick up food and other basic needs, go to medical appointments, pick up medication, attend religious practice activities or to obtain COVID-19 testing with strict adherence to preventive measures.
- Attend work with the approval of the employer if the work is essential and cannot be done remotely with strict adherence to preventive measures.
- Have clinical rotations, student teaching or other off-campus experiential learning assignments to continue only with approval from the college dean and disclosure to the organization of placement and renewed approval by that organization with strict adherence to preventive measures.
- Leave their room or residence for purposes of physical activity in groups of no more than two with strict adherence to preventive measures.
- Although strongly discouraged by OCPHD during the term of this order, if GVSU specifically authorizes students who are associated with intercollegiate varsity sports, they may attend practices provided a currently licensed physician is present during the entire process, actively supervises the team's COVID-19 mitigation activities during the practice and has the final authority to suspend the practice if he or she believes COVID-19 mitigation practices require that result.

[Read more of the 'Staying in Place' order and required actions](#) | [FAQs](#)

Positivity and case numbers are two key indicators to monitor the risk level of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ottawa County. Currently, both positivity and new cases are experiencing a 14-day increasing trend. "GVSU student interaction with the broader community greatly increases the risk of community disease spread which may result in serious illness or death," said Dr. Heidel, OCPHD medical director. "We need students to take the 'Staying in Place' order seriously and be vigilant to help stop the spread of COVID-19. We commend the GVSU administrative leaders for their partnership and commitment to aggressive disease prevention measures that are essential to help contain the outbreak."

"All of us share the goal of keeping our communities safe," said Grand Valley State University President Philomena V. Mantella. "GVSU remains committed to following all public health guidance and to stopping the spread of this virus, and I want to thank all of our students who have been acting responsibly. The university has partnered with the county department of public health from the beginning, and we ask our students to cooperate with this two-week order and do their part for their friends, family and the greater community. We can slow down the spread if we work together."

The novel coronavirus (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease that can result in serious illness or death. There is currently no approved vaccine or antiviral treatment for this disease. According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), the virus is thought to spread mainly from person-to-person through respiratory droplets produced when an infected person coughs or sneezes. These droplets can land in the mouth or nose of people who are nearby or possibly be inhaled into the lungs. Spread is more likely when people are in close contact with one another (within about 6 feet).

OCDPH is asking everyone to please continue with the **disease prevention measures** of maintaining physical distance from others, wear a face covering and practice exceptional hygiene. Additionally, it is important for people who test positive to **please help us identify their close contacts**, and for both cases and contacts to stay away from others for the recommended time so we can keep our communities safe and healthy.

[Staying in Place Order](#) | [GVSU Dashboard](#) | [OCDPH Dashboard](#) | [COVID-19 Factsheet](#)

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