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Whiteside County Health Department and Community Health Clinic Mark the End of the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency

May 11, 2023 – On March 9th, 2020, the State of Illinois issued the initial emergency proclamation for COVID-19 as the State, nation, and world were bracing for what few people anticipated would be an unprecedented challenge. Now, on May 11th, 2023 after more than 3 years, the United States and State of Illinois Public Health Emergency (PHE) declarations are ending, marking a major milestone in the pandemic during which Illinois saw more than 4 million cases and 36,000 deaths from COVID-19, a day which Governor JB Pritzker has declared as “Illinois Public Health & Health Care Hero Day.”

Marking this event, the Whiteside County Health Department and Community Health Clinic hosted a worker appreciation lunch, generously donated by Arthur's Garden Deli, the Sterling Walmart Distribution Center, Sterling Walmart Supercenter, and Rock Falls Culver's, to honor their public health and healthcare staff who gave so much to protect the public during the last three years. In addition they put together a time capsule to help commemorate the setbacks, challenges faced and victories during the pandemic to serve as a reminder and encouragement to future generations of public health and healthcare workers.

“Today, we honor the public health and health care heroes who risked their safety and put in long hours, sacrificing nights, weekends and precious time with their friends and family to serve our community and their patients during the darkest days of the pandemic,” said Cheryl Lee the Whiteside County Public Health Administrator, “and say thank you to those who worked to protect our most vulnerable in Long Term Care Facilities, local hospitals who navigated patient surges, resource shortages and assisted with vaccination and staffing agencies who reinforce the strained public health and health care workforce. We are also thankful to the many community members, local businesses and news outlets that provided support throughout the response through communication, donated space for vaccination and testing, and supplies and support to our team.”

The end of the PHE means the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) ability to collect and share certain data will change. The CDC will no longer be highlighting COVID-19 case and death data on their Data tracker or collecting county level positivity data which was used in determining healthcare and community masking recommendations. The agency will continue to monitor COVID-19 hospital admissions, Emergency Department visits, deaths, wastewater surveillance, and vaccinations for jurisdictions who continue to report.

With the end of the PHE, the federal government is expected to phase out providing tests, vaccines and treatment directly to states – however these efforts will not end immediately, but over the coming months. When existing stockpiles of tests, vaccines and treatments run out, coverage will shift to public and private insurers.



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The US Health and Human Services (HHS) has also announced it is launching the HHS Bridge Access Program For COVID-19 Vaccines and Treatments for those who are uninsured. The program will create a \$1.1 billion public-private partnership to help maintain uninsured individuals' access to COVID-19 care at their local pharmacies, through existing public health infrastructure, and at their local health centers.

In addition, the Illinois Department of Healthcare and Family Services (HFS) has launched the *Ready to Renew* campaign to ensure that Illinoisans who are enrolled in Medicaid coverage do not lose coverage due to the expiration of the automatic renewal provisions that were in place during the Public Health Emergency. In Illinois, there will not be a "coverage cliff," where everyone loses coverage at one time. Rather, redeterminations will happen on a rolling basis through mid-2024

"It's amazing that in less than three years so many people were able to come together to develop, approve and implement so many safe and effective testing, treatment and protection options for an emerging illness," said Cory Law, Assistant Director of Public Health at the Whiteside County Health Department, "and we are glad the Federal Government, State of Illinois and private insurers are remaining committed to ensuring access to safe and effective vaccines, treatment, testing, for residents of Illinois."

For more information on IDPH's resources and data visit [IDPH's COVID-19 Dashboard](#).

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