



Dear UCP Seguin Staff, Foster Parents, Families, and Friends,

It has been several months since our last COVID-19 update. At UCP Seguin, things have been stable and absent of coronavirus cases for a quite some time. With the emergence of the newly predominant and highly transmissible Omicron variant, however, we thought it of utmost importance to provide helpful information and resources to our stakeholders as cases are again surging in Illinois and across the country.

First and foremost, we hope that this email finds each of you and your family members safe and well. As you know, the safety of our participants, our workforce, our families, and the community has been our top priority from the outset of this pandemic. To support this commitment, we made it a requirement early on that all employees be tested for COVID-19 regularly, while instituting thorough safety protocols to mitigate its spread.

In late July of this year, we issued a mandate that all staff be vaccinated as of October 1st. We are proud to report that we met that goal. With the exception of a very small number who are working remotely and have been granted exemptions, 100% of UCP Seguin employees are completely vaccinated. Additionally, nearly 100% of the residents of the agency's CILA group home program are completely vaccinated and 99% of individuals living in the community and receiving day services are vaccinated. Over 90% of Children's Foster Care Providers are also vaccinated and 100% of Adult Foster Care Providers have had at least one dose of vaccine.

To ensure consistent access for all, UCP Seguin has regularly provided COVID-19 testing and has held over a dozen clinics, vaccinating over 2,000 people. More recently we have hosted two booster clinics, with plans to continue to host one-to-two booster clinics per month beginning in January. In short, we are proud of our community for doing everything possible to maintain and increase safety. We will do whatever it takes to see that everyone continues to have access to the vaccine, boosters, and coronavirus testing.

While UCP Seguin has surpassed the state and the nation related to vaccine status, Illinois COVID19 numbers are at the highest they've been in a year, inclusive of positive cases and hospitalizations. Nearly 16,500 reported positive coronavirus cases have been reported in the last 24 hours along with 66 more COVID-related deaths. Hospital bed capacity is at a critically low level and beds are filling up quickly, with over 4,000 patients currently in the hospital with COVID-19 and 867 of those patients in the Intensive Care Units in hospitals across the state.

Important to note is that Illinois Department of Public Health data indicates that 90% of those hospitalized with the virus are unvaccinated. As of today's date, nearly 64% of Illinois citizens are fully vaccinated and 71.5% have had one dose of either the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine. However, only 15% of eligible Illinoisans have received the booster

dose of vaccine, which is a crucial step in maintaining fully vaccinated status and has proven to be the most effective protection against serious disease associated with both the Delta and Omicron variants.

Like the rest of the state, country, and world, UCP Seguin has experienced an uptick in positive COVID-19 tests over the past two weeks. As of today, we have had nineteen (19) people test positive for the virus – 16 staff and 3 participants. Thankfully, each one of those who has tested positive is fully vaccinated and symptoms have been mild to non-existent, with nobody experiencing serious illness. Nobody from UCP Seguin has required hospitalization during this surge. Additionally in our Children’s Foster Care program, one child and one foster father have tested positive for COVID-19. We continue to have our CDC certified lab technicians performing on site rapid testing for employees and participants who are symptomatic, feel that they may have been exposed, or just want reassurance that they are not carrying the virus. We are also continuing to work with Star Lab to go out to program sites and homes to administer PCR testing to participants, staff, and foster care providers. We continue to maintain that testing is crucial to keeping everyone safe!

With the holiday season well underway, so many of us are looking forward to getting together with family and friends to celebrate. Like last year at this time, COVID-19 again will challenge our traditions. And while we need to take precautions in order to keep ourselves and one another safe, there are differences from last year to this year. Yes, there are highly contagious mutations – variants – of the virus including Delta and Omicron, but this holiday season we are fortunate to have some measures of protection. Still, vaccines are only effective for those who have received them and are most effective for those who are eligible to receive a third shot (or 2nd if Johnson & Johnson) as a booster to increase antibodies. We cannot say strongly or often enough that vaccines and now booster shots are the most effective way to protect against serious disease. Moderna has indicated that people who receive the Moderna booster have antibodies increased 37-fold!

As a precaution prior to gathering, the CDC is suggesting that those getting together with family and friends who are not members of their immediate households be tested for COVID-19. At-home Binax tests are available for purchase at Walgreen’s and CVS pharmacies and come in a package of two tests, although supplies are very limited at this time. The Abbott Binax tests are the rapid tests that screen for specific proteins associated with COVID and while not perfect, are still quite accurate. While this particular version of COVID test will miss some positives (about 15 of 100), they only give a false negative in 1 in 100 tests. PCR tests remain the most accurate test methods and are available in several walk-in or pop-ups throughout the city and suburbs. You can find a pop-up site by following this link:

<https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/testing-sites.html>

As always, UCP Seguin continues to follow the science, inclusive of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) safety guidelines as outlined by Dr. Anthony Fauci and reported by Newsweek at the following link via both an article and a short video:

<https://www.newsweek.com/cdc-recommendations-holiday-gatherings-dr-anthony-fauci-omicron-covid-variant-spreads-united-states-1660503>

We are truly most grateful for your never-ending support and assistance as we work together through the challenges that COVID-19 continues to present.

Best Wishes for a Joyful and Healthy Holiday Season,



Michelle Sanders
Chief Operating Officer &
Spokesperson, COVID Task
Force



Joe Mengoni
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Jim Haptonstahl
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