

Position Statement in support of ongoing response to COVID-19

The Wilkes County Board of Health recognize the critical nature of public health services during the COVID-19 pandemic to prevent further strain on the local healthcare resources, our economy, and to reduce preventable life loss caused by COVID-19, provided by Wilkes County Health Department in Wilkes County and regionally, do hereby provide key guiding principles supporting our efforts:

- The [10 Essential Public Health Services](#) guide the foundation for public health services. These services provide a framework for public health to protect and promote the health of all people in all communities. In its intent, public health services have infectious disease surveillance, response, mitigation, prevention, communication, and health equity at the heart of key activities.
- According to the [Association of State and Territorial Health Officials](#), sound infectious disease control programs require science-based policies, programs, and infrastructure be in place to prevent infectious disease morbidity and mortality, rapidly identify and control outbreaks, support disease elimination, and prevent and respond to re-emerging and emerging infectious disease threats.
- Wilkes County Health Department implements communicable disease control including:
 - ❖ *Data surveillance and reporting:*
 - Following up on reported COVID-19 cases to maintain data surveillance for Wilkes County and conduct case investigation, contact tracing efforts according to current CDC and NC DHHS guidelines.
 - ❖ *Use of existing public health laws to prevent and limit spread of infectious disease:*
 - Under state law (G.S. [130A-144](#) and [130A-145](#)), local health directors and the state health director have the authority to give control measures, including issuing isolation and quarantine orders, to prevent the spread of COVID-19 or any other communicable disease posing a significant threat to the public health. Control measures are to be given as prescribed by the Commission for Public Health in rule. The general control measure rule ([10A NCAC 41A .0201](#)) aligns control measures with guidelines and recommended actions' published by the CDC. The quarantine and isolation guidance in the NC DHHS [StrongSchools Toolkit](#)

reflects current control measure guidelines and recommendations from the CDC.

- ❖ *Prevention programs, education, and outreach*
 - Promote prevention strategies through partnerships and information sharing whenever possible. Share current information about key prevention measures, including COVID-19 vaccines and wearing face coverings.
 - Administer and coordinate with other agencies to administer COVID-19 vaccines.

- ❖ *Preparedness*
 - Continually assess efforts and coordination needs for ongoing preparedness and response needs guided by CDC and NC DHHS key public health preparedness principles and actions.

- ❖ *Communication and Collaboration*
 - Build and maintain partnerships to prevent, prepare, and respond.
 - Collaborate across partners to build awareness and support for implementing public health recommendations.
 - Proactively communicate about current situation conditions and updated guidance in multiple methods to reach the community, including, but not limited to participating in public meetings, coordinating partnership conversations, sharing information through website, media channels and social media.

- ❖ *Supporting an effective public health workforce*
 - Recruit and support a diverse, engaged, and connected public health workforce that is cross-sector and diversified to meet the needs of the community and region.
 - Advocate for ongoing infrastructure support to ensure adequate public health staffing.

- ❖ *Providing key patient care services and linkages to support access to care*
 - As a dual-entity federally qualified health center, Wilkes County Health Department acknowledges the importance of caring for those in our care by supporting ongoing patient care needs for primary care, behavioral health, substance use disorder, school health, and oral health in a safe environment.

Therefore, the members of this governing board on this day, August 31, 2021, do hereby affirm our collective support for the work of the Health Director, Rachel Willard, and the Wilkes County Health Department staff continuing to bravely respond to the COVID-19 pandemic affecting our communities.

Signed, , Susan Bachmeier, Board Chair