



Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Iowa covid death #s

Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Mon, Jul 6, 2020 at 10:17 AM

To: "Mccoy, Amy" <amy.mccoy@idph.iowa.gov>

Hello Amy,

I just received this reply from the CDC.

Can you please confirm how IDPH is counting deaths? Is it accurate to say the agency is counting all deaths from COVID-19 and not just those CDC codes as "underlying cause" deaths?

There has been a lot of chatter about this on social media and I want to help people understand what is going on.

Thanks,

Laura

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **PAO Query (CDC)** <paoquery@cdc.gov>

Date: Mon, Jul 6, 2020 at 7:50 AM

Subject: RE: Iowa covid death #s

To: Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Hi Laura,

See response below from our mortality statistics branch:

The Iowa Dept of Public Health is probably reporting based on case surveillance, not death certificates. Since we (NCHS) do the coding and assign the underlying cause, the IDPH counts are not likely based on underlying cause. The death certificate counts lag the case surveillance by however long it takes the state to send us the data and for it to be coded.

Let us know if you have any other questions

Jeff

Jeff Lancashire
Public Affairs Officer
Acting Associate Director for Communications
National Center for Health Statistics
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

From: Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>
Sent: Thursday, July 2, 2020 3:24 PM
To: PAO Query (CDC) <paoquery@cdc.gov>
Subject: Re: Iowa covid death #s

Jeff, following up on these questions: there seems to be a delay in reporting Iowa COVID-19 deaths on the CDC website.

The CDC tables (attached screenshot) indicate there were 670 "multiple cause" COVID-19 deaths in Iowa through the week ending June 20. But the Iowa Department of Public Health was reporting 681 total deaths as of June 20, and I think those only included the "underlying cause" deaths (am seeking to confirm).

What is the typical process for CDC to collect this data from state public health departments? Is it common for the numbers to lag by several days to a week?

Thanks in advance for helping me understand so I can better inform my readers.

Laura

On Wed, Jul 1, 2020 at 12:09 PM PAO Query (CDC) <paoquery@cdc.gov> wrote:

Hello Laura,

Regarding your questions about covid19 death stats in Iowa:

The multiple cause and underlying cause numbers should not be added together. The underlying cause count is a subset of the multiple cause count. Adding the two numbers would double count the underlying cause number. So the interpretation is not quite correct. A correct interpretation for Iowa would be:

“...this means 49 Iowans died **from** COVID-19 that week, of whom 45 had COVID-19 as the underlying cause and another 4 had **COVID-19 reported as a contributing factor.**”

It is important to note that the death certificate is designed to elicit only those conditions that caused or contributed to death. It does not indicate the number that died with (i.e., that had) COVID-19. Simply testing positive for COVID-19 is not sufficient for inclusion on the death certificate. If COVID-19 is not a cause of death or contributory factor, it should not be reported on the death certificate.

“Multiple cause” in this case indicates that we are counting from the multiple cause fields, i.e., we are selecting cases with any mention of COVID-19, regardless whether it was the underlying cause or not. Underlying cause indicates that among all conditions reported on the death certificate, COVID-19 was the underlying cause of death. When COVID-19 is reported on the death certificate, but is not the underlying cause, it can be described as a factor contributing to death.

Regards

Jeff Lancashire

Public Affairs Officer

Acting Associate Director for Communications

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