



Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

delay in reporting hospitalizations, deaths

Mccoy, Amy <amy.mccoy@idph.iowa.gov>
To: Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com>

Mon, Aug 24, 2020 at 10:29 AM

Laura,

There has to be a positive COVID-19 test (pre- or post-mortem) for that surveillance reporting piece, but you can see the entire process through what I sent.

Sincerely,
Amy A. McCoy

Legislative Liaison/ Policy Advisor/ COVID-19 Media Relations | Iowa Department of Public Health | 321 E. 12th St.
Des Moines, IA 50319 | Office: 515-281-8960 | amy.mccoy@idph.iowa.gov

Protecting and Improving the Health of Iowans

On Mon, Aug 24, 2020 at 10:15 AM Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Amy, thanks for that but none of what you wrote explains why coronavirus.iowa.gov still shows 10 deaths for Washington County and 1 for Van Buren when local public health officials say they have 11 and 2 COVID-19 fatalities, respectively.

Is this related to the antigen testing issue? Or is there some other reason IDPH does not acknowledge these deaths as COVID-19 related?

On Mon, Aug 24, 2020 at 10:05 AM Mccoy, Amy <amy.mccoy@idph.iowa.gov> wrote:

Laura,

There are a couple of ways we record death information, one is for surveillance purposes for immediate infectious disease control, and then we also collect and report information related to statistical death records.

- For the data posts at coronavirus.iowa.gov - COVID-19 is a reportable condition, so our health care, coroner and other partners report deaths that have a confirmed COVID-19 test to us right away so that we can share as much information as possible as the situation with COVID develops. This is our active public health surveillance and reporting system and means the person has tested positive for COVID-19, did not recover and died. Tests can be done pre- or post-mortem for confirmation of COVID-19 for these reporting purposes.
- For death records, funeral directors, medical certifiers (DO, MD, PA, and ARNP) and medical examiners document and certify the person's demographics and cause of death, which is the certifiers' medical opinion. A certifier or medical examiner may use the terms of probable or likely when a clinical diagnosis of COVID-19 is made. The department checks the cause of death with COVID-19 records. If the certifier did not know the person was COVID-19 positive, the department will identify the case and work with the certifier to make further determination and update records as needed.
- Every death record is checked to ensure accuracy and there are many considerations. For example, an Iowan may die in another state and for surveillance purposes their death was not immediately reported to Iowa, but their death record would later reflect their death here as a resident of Iowa even if they were traveling when they passed. Another example is a person may have Parkinson's Disease and die of complications from that disease, but may also test positive for COVID-19 and not have any symptoms that contributed to their death.

- The [CDC National Vital Statistics System reports](#) based on the cause of death statements on the death record only. For this early reporting, CDC does not distinguish between immediate cause and contributing factors because they see only medical codes that show that there was a positive COVID-19 case and a death. They're not able to tell in this initial reporting whether COVID-19 was the cause of death, a contributing factor, or if the person was an asymptomatic carrier who died of another cause.
- Iowa follows CDC guidance which requires that:
 - If COVID-19 is the cause of death, it is reported on the death certificate.
 - Using standard World Health Organization terminology such as "Coronavirus Disease 2019" or "COVID-19."
 - Reporting pre-existing conditions that contributed to the death as part of the death certificate.

Sincerely,

Amy A. McCoy

Legislative Liaison/ Policy Advisor/ COVID-19 Media Relations | Iowa Department of Public Health | 321 E. 12th St. Des Moines, IA 50319 | Office: 515-281-8960 | amy.mccoy@idph.iowa.gov

Protecting and Improving the Health of Iowans

On Wed, Jul 29, 2020 at 1:43 PM Laura Belin <desmoinesdem@bleedingheartland.com> wrote:

Hello Amy,

No one from IDPH ever answered my questions about how the state is counting COVID-19 deaths. I am still seeking information about whether IDPH counts all of what the CDC describes as "multiple cause" deaths, or only what the CDC labels "underlying cause" deaths.

I also have questions after seeing this report from KCII radio:

<https://www.kciiradio.com/2020/07/29/another-covid-19-death-in-washington-county-statewide-hospitalizations-see-uptick/>

Washington County Public Health Director Danielle Pettit-Majewski provided updated counts during Tuesday's county board of supervisors' meeting, "If we look at the trends for the hospitalizations and patients in ICU those do continue to trend up. The [state] coronavirus website is a little bit delayed. There's been some delay in some of the data coming in. And so, right now it shows that we are sitting at nine deaths in Washington County, we are actually at 11 confirmed. So that is about two weeks behind, I'm not sure what the delay is on that. I have talked to the state, my understanding is that they are behind on statusing."

At this writing, I see the state website shows 10 deaths for Washington County. What is going on, and why are there such long delays in updating numbers from the counties?

Who is in charge of updating the hospitalizations and deaths pages on the website? Why should Iowans be confident those numbers are current and not lagging a week or two behind?

I'm copying Pat Garrett to save you the trouble of referring this inquiry to the governor's office.

Laura

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