



# HILL COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

302 4th Avenue Havre, MT 59501 • 406-400-2415 • hillcountyhealth.com

**Public Health**  
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Proposal submitted 10/16/2020

## BACKGROUND

Hill County is seeing a dramatic rise in COVID-19 cases, related hospitalizations, and deaths. Over the past two weeks (since October 1<sup>st</sup>) there have been 282 new cases. This means that 59% of our total cases have occurred since October 1<sup>st</sup>. Also since October 1<sup>st</sup>, nine additional COVID-19 related deaths of Hill County individuals were confirmed, bringing our COVID-19 related deaths to twelve as of October 15<sup>th</sup>.

COVID-19 is a novel virus. This means that we have not seen this virus before. It is very important to follow public health interventions to control the spread and limit the number of people who are infected, largely because we do not know the long-term effects this virus will have on people. We are learning more and more about the short-term effects, but much of what this virus can do is unknown. Help us control the spread and learn all that we can to protect our community.

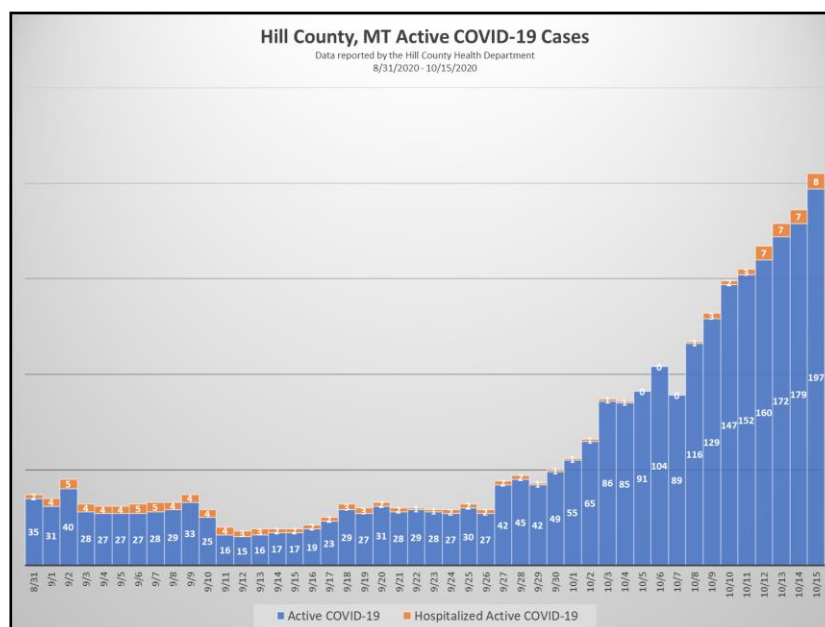
This document provides a background on all COVID-19 related data in Hill County and presents a plan forward for the control of COVID-19.

### Health Officer/Department Recommendation:

It is the Department's recommendation that the Board of Health approve/support this plan.

### COVID-19 Cases in Hill County:

Locally, COVID-19 cases have increased drastically since the beginning of September. The rate of COVID-19 per 100,000 people has increased from 11.26 per 100,000 from the first week of September 7<sup>th</sup> to 115.26 per 100,000 for the week beginning October 5<sup>th</sup>.



Source	Metric	8/31-9/6	9/7-9/13	9/14-9/20	9/21-9/27	9/28-10/4	10/5-10/11	10/12-10/15*
HCHD	New positive COVID-19 cases reported	13	13	23	35	68	133	105*
HCHD	Average rate of new cases per day per 100,000 people	11.26	11.26	19.93	30.33	58.93	115.26	159.25*

\* Not a full week

As of October 14<sup>th</sup>, Northern Montana Care Center is in the middle of an outbreak. This increases strain on the hospital with the possibility of increased hospitalizations, as well as the loss of staff to isolation and quarantine measures. Internal data from NMHC testing over the past week (10/5 - 10/11) has shown a positivity rate of 23.4%. This does not include tests ran at Rocky Boy. The ICU Capacity available at NMHC on 10/13 is 50%. We have seen an increase in cases reported linked to large social events in our community including but not limited to, bars, casinos, restaurants, weddings, and fundraisers etc.

In the last 8 months, we have reported 12 deaths related to COVID-19. In the 2018-2019 Influenza season, Hill County only had 1 Influenza related death.

**Health Department Response:**

The Health Department's staff is working day in and day out responding to the rise in case numbers in our community. Currently, five permanent staff have been reassigned from their typical job duties to COVID-19. An additional seven temporary staff are currently helping assist, most of them part-time. The hiring of new staff to address capacity is ongoing through collaboration with MSU-Northern, at least through December 31, 2020. We have not been able to find assistance in a fast enough manner to respond to the increase in cases as quickly as we normally would.

## **CONTROL MEASURE PLAN**

The goal of this plan is to inform the community of the control measures that will be put in place if the COVID-19 cases reach a certain level in our community. The data to determine if this plan will be implemented will not be measured until the week of October 26<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup> to allow Hill County the opportunity to change the trajectory of the cases through routine public health measures including social distancing, wearing a mask, not attending or hosting large events, staying home when ill and following isolation/quarantine orders.

### **New Restrictions**

If the number of new cases is at or above an average of 50 per day per 100,000 (which calculates to about 58 cases per week for Hill County) for the week of October 26<sup>th</sup> – November 1<sup>st</sup> or any Monday – Sunday week following November 1<sup>st</sup>, the following restrictions will go into effect at 5:00pm the following Wednesday afternoon\*:

- Social gatherings will be limited to no more than 25 people, regardless of the ability to socially distance
- Restaurants/Bars/Distilleries/Breweries/Casinos will be limited to 50% capacity

\*Schools and school activities and sports will not be included in the order

### **Data Calculations:**

- The population of Hill County will utilize the 2019 Census Estimate of 16,484
- All cases will be calculated on a Monday through Sunday week

### **Length of time of restriction:**

- One month from initiation of order
- After one month, the new cases average will be assessed, and the continuation of restrictions will be determined based on whether the average is below 50 per day per 100,000 or not
- The need for further restrictions may be necessary if we do not see a decrease in cases

### **Public Awareness:**

Every night by 5:00pm we will post our daily numbers on the Hill County Health Department Facebook page and our website ([hillcountyhealth.com](http://hillcountyhealth.com)) so the public is aware of our current numbers.

In addition, we will issue the draft Health Officer Order on Monday October 26<sup>th</sup>. This will allow a minimum of one week for businesses to review, seek guidance and prepare. The first possible implementation of the order would be November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020 at 5pm.