

Washington County, Texas Joint Information Center (JIC) Video Update 8-21-2020

Video location: <https://youtu.be/Dwsq5WrqkLQ>

Wende Ragonis: “Hello, Washington County this is Wende Ragonis with the Washington County Chamber of Commerce and we're here today with Doctor Loesch to talk about back to school in Washington County. The last time we spoke we talked about business and workforce questions but today with our education partners across the county welcoming students back to their campuses we thought focusing on education would be a great topic for today's discussion. So in addition to Dr Loesch, we also have Jamie Woodall who is the Head Athletic Trainer and COVID response leader for Brenham ISD. I want to welcome you both and thank you for your time today. So, Dr. Loesch, let's start with you, can you tell us a little bit about the state of COVID-19 in Washington County and specifically what you're seeing in your clinic?”

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: “I'll tell you I think we're a lot better place [than] we were the last time we talked. Numbers over all the state are starting to decline. We're not exactly plummeting back to earth but the numbers are slowly trickling down. In Washington County we're still seeing a lag in case reporting from the state I think there was even a glut of cases that were released today. Though, some of those cases are actually fairly old in fact some of I think are even recovered. I don't have all the details on it yet. The line list will come out sometime tomorrow where I get all the details on it, but I'll tell you, just from my experience in the clinic, the number of positives I'm seeing in a week is going down. We're not seeing nearly the number we were seeing before. So, I think the first wave is finally trying to die off.”

Wende Ragonis: “So now let's talk a little about general school safety. Dr Loesch, can you tell us a little bit about what our education partners can do to keep their students safe?”

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: “You know in the... It's been about 6 months now that we've been doing these video visit/interviews and one thing I've learned is that if I could see the future I would not be doing this job, I'd be in Las Vegas right now. I'll tell you; nobody knows what the future's going to bring. I would expect when we start having more social interactions with kids in school that cases will probably go up somewhat. We are not sure how well children spread this. Most of the indications are that children are not as big a spreader of this virus as adults are. Which hopefully means that the kids get back into school and we'll see a little bit of an uptick but not a massive uptick. I think with all the preparations the school district has gone through, that's what we're gonna see, just a little uptick.”

Wende Ragonis: "Jamie can you tell us what Brenham ISD is doing to keep educators and students safe on their campuses?"

Jamie Woodall: "Yes, we have worked tirelessly to make sure we are following CDC guidelines, our [Texas Education Agency] T.E.A. guidelines, and just making it appropriate for our community and so that we feel safe when we do come back. The 4 biggest things that we can do that are the most important is wear a mask, socially distance, clean: wash your hands & clean your equipment around you, and report when you're having symptoms as soon as you start to have them. Those are the 4 most important things that we can do as an individual and as a school. If anyone wants to see our full plan it is on our website brenhamisd.net and we have a COVID information center right there on the home page. Click there and that's where you would find that plan."

Wende Ragonis: "Even without an active pandemic, school campuses typically have nurses on site because kids get sick, so how are we going to be able to tell if it's COVID or cold? Doctor Loesch, could you shed some light on that for us?"

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: "You know we've had meetings about this they've been very good meetings back and forth, but we have painfully looked at this, and the problem is COVID-19 presents just like the common cold, it presents just like allergies in some cases. It's gonna be a difficult time I'm afraid. The problem is you're going to have a lot of kids that don't have COVID that may get sent home. The problem is because of the the danger of the virus we have to err on the side of caution and so they are going to be instances where children that have maybe minor symptoms are going to have to go home and quarantine until we can prove that they don't have COVID-19."

Wende Ragonis: "So Jamie what are the protocols of Brenham ISD if a student is not COVID positive but they're still symptomatic or ill, how will you handle that?"

Jamie Woodall: "We have a few different procedures that we have to look at based on each individual's reaction to or response to a report and so if an individual has symptoms then we have a 10-day quarantine that is required. If they are exposed or test positive and do not have symptoms then it is a 14-day quarantine based on the incubation period. In order for those individuals to come back they will need to follow the guidelines in our campus plans which includes our campus nurses generally is who this will be, that is reported to them of the cases that then we have those nurses who will follow up with those individuals to determine if you were asymptomatic, did you begin to have symptoms, if not, then yes, your quarantine is over and you can come back. If they were symptomatic then we follow the procedures of the 10-day quarantine and they follow up making sure that their symptoms are actually gone, fever free for 24 hours before they come back. And then the only time that we are going to require a doctor's note for someone to come back is if we have someone who wants to be exempt from those quarantine requirements and so that would require a physician's note providing not necessarily an

alternative diagnosis but a diagnosis other than COVID needs to be provided. We don't necessarily need to know what it is, we just need to know that it's not COVID. So that's how somebody could come back without going through those procedures.”

Wende Ragonis: “So Doctor Loesch, what can parents do to keep their children healthy?”

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: “In general the general health of the child the most important thing I'm not a pediatrician but you know I've got 3 children of my own, I've got some experience here. One thing is their general health is very important. If a child is stressed, or not sleeping, not eating well, etc., they're gonna be more prone to picking up infections and so one thing is make sure they're eating a nutritious diet, you know, get the junk food out of it. Make sure they're getting some exercise, not just staying in front of video games all day. Make sure they are getting enough sleep. That is the hard one for some kids. Make sure they're turning the devices off early enough, they're getting down, they're going to bed, they're not tired all day long. So if you can do those kind of things, you can help a lot. On top of that, just make sure they've had their general checkups, you know? Make sure they're seeing their doctor. If they have chronic illnesses like asthma, diabetes, etc., they're seeing their doctor and those things are as well controlled as they can be.”

Wende Ragonis: “Jamie, do you have anything to add to that?”

Jamie Woodall: “As far as being the head athletic trainer for the district I do have a few things to add for our athletes. As we return to school, the U. I. L. provided an extension for our physicals that are required for our athletes. If an athlete has a physical on file from the previous year then all they would have to do is renew their online paperwork which includes a medical history. If they have a red flag on their medical history that is new from the previous physical or a cardiac condition we would ask them to get a another physical, an updated physical, or a note from their doctor that states it's safe for them to participate.”

Wende Ragonis: “It can be confusing when to quarantine and when to not, so I'm hoping Dr. Loesch, you can explain that process to us. When is it appropriate to quarantine and for how long?”

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: “So the whole point of a quarantine is to reduce the spread of an illness. In this case a very dangerous virus. We fought with this with patients throughout this period. Quarantine doesn't mean ‘I can still go to the store’ it doesn't mean ‘I can still go do things.’ It really means you need to stay home. You need to stay away from other people. Now children are a different category because children rely on parents. You can't just leave children at home by themselves. So it's going to require some sacrifice on the parents part and quite honestly, if the children are seeing this, because again we're not sure how well this is spreading between children, there's a good chance if the child has it the parents either have already been infected or were the source of the infection in the first

place. So, the big thing is staying home, not going out for anything. You can contact friends/family/somebody to bring groceries and food in the house. It depends on how long ago in, there are two quarantine periods, 10-day and 14-day periods. It just depends on what situation you're in."

Wende Ragonis: "Jamie what will Brenham ISD need if a student is recovering and now they're ready to come back to class?"

Jamie Woodall: "We provide quite a bit guidance when a nurse calls home and says a student or staff member needs to quarantine. We have developed a one pager that would go home with a student as far as this is why we're sending them home and then what needs to be done in order to come back, but then also understanding what quarantine actually means, as far as just trying to not extend our quarantine unnecessarily."

Wende Ragonis: "Jamie that's great information can you tell us where we can find more?"

Jamie Woodall: "Individuals can go to [brenhamisd.net](https://www.brenhamisd.net) and select the COVID-19 Information Center button and you will find our reentry plan you'll find a big yellow box that says FAQs for frequently asked questions. We're adding to that constantly because we're constantly getting a new question, which we completely understand and we want our community to understand the process as best as we can explain it and we know if one person is asking the question it's probably on the minds of other people so the FAQs are the first thing you're going to see on that web page for the COVID Information Center but that's where you'll also see our reentry plan and you'll find frequently asked questions regarding transportation, child nutrition, curriculum... It's broken down very well so that parents can find the answers to the questions that they have."

Wende Ragonis: "So the stress and uncertainty of COVID it can be challenging for us all. Dr. Loesch, can you share some of our community's resources to help support mental health for adults and for children?"

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: "I've seen more anxiety and depression the last 6 months than I've seen my 15-year career. I mean this has really been anxiety inducing. I'm seeing more and more cases every day. Depression/anxiety can be just as deadly as a heart attack. Don't wait to treat it. You do not wait with chest pain for months to do something about it. So be a little more proactive about it. One thing I'm gonna tell people is again, be careful with social media and the news. We live in a different time than when I was growing up, when we were growing up. The news was a much different creature. We're living in a 24-hour news cycle now, it's really easy to get caught up in it and keep perseverating over and over and over again about things that, you know, 'the sky is falling', the sky is not falling. This is dangerous, it's serious, but it's something we're going to have to deal with. In the community, for the

adult patients out there, I say never forget about your primary care doctor. There are counselors in this town. Mental health in the United States is not as strong and robust as we would like, but there are definitely resources out there and I know Jamie's got some resources to the school for the kids."

Jamie Woodall: "Brenham ISD has Social Emotional Coordinators that are employed through the district and that would be [Rebecca Wachslar](#) & [Shawn Mays](#). They are trained and educated and well versed in our students' and staff's social emotional needs. They are ready and willing to help our students and staff during this time and we know that separation is hard on our students and our staff and this is a very different time that we don't understand. We've never been through this before and so to ask somebody to feel comfortable with what is happening right now is not appropriate and so we expect that there's going to be some needs for our Social Emotional Coordinators and we hope that our students and our staff will reach out to them because they are very qualified to handle these situations.

Wende Ragonis: "Thank you both for your time today and for all the hard work that you've done to keep our community safe and especially our students and our educators as they're coming back on campus Jamie is there anything on behalf of Brenham ISD that you would like to share with our viewers?"

Jamie Woodall: "I can't express to you how much work has gone in to providing a quality education and a quality experience for not only our students but also our staff. I would ask our parents to look at the parent portal as the access point for communication. If our parents would sign up for that parent portal, that is an excellent communication tool for us as a school district to our parents. You can get your child schedule through the parent portal, which is a huge thing right now. I know students are very excited about getting their schedules for this next year. That is one to-do list item I would really promote. Just know we are working so hard and have been working so hard to make this a good experience. It started way back at spring break when we started this whole process making sure that our seniors were recognized as best as we possibly could. We also saw our summer strength and conditioning program in our sport specific instruction ramp up through the summer and seeing our kids on campus was really good for everyone's soul, I think, including the kids; as far as them getting to at least see each other and have some physical activity. Through the planning of coming back to school, I am so proud of the work that we're doing and I can't express how hard our administrators and our staff are working to make this work."

Wende Ragonis: "Dr. Loesch, thank you for your time as well is there anything that you would like to share with our viewers?"

Dr. William Robert Loesch, MD: "You've got a wonderful staff working for these kids. I'm speaking both as a parent and as a health care provider. This is an emotional time and we've talked about stress and anxiety, and look I've got 3 kids about to get back into the school system. They're going to go to in person education. They need to. I was telling the other day, spring break is finally coming to an end in a

few days, because it's been a very long spring break. I'm just gonna ask all the parents out there to do the best they can to show a little grace and mercy because this is a demanding time and it's a moving target and we don't know what's going to happen. They have spent weeks and weeks working on this and the plan of course is never perfect (and nothing is ever perfect) but it's as good as we can do and I think it's going to be an excellent plan it's going to work out. We'll roll with the punches, it's going to be okay. We're gonna get through this all together so just keep up with the good work and 'Go Cubs'.

Jamie Woodall: "Go Cubs."

<https://bit.ly/covidwctx>

<https://www.facebook.com/WashingtonCountyOEM/>