



## Community Awareness Message from Health Commissioners & COVID-19 Response Team Members

It is a year this month that the very first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed in Wuhan, China. This year has been unlike anything that many of us have witnessed. We think about the tens of millions around the world who have endured the virus and the millions more who quarantined, and we offer condolences to the 1.47 million who have died. That includes over 200 residents of our county who have been taken from their loved ones. Nevertheless, our frontline workers, teachers, and residents have moved us forward and endured as Stark County has done in any time of crisis.

Today, we moved to Public Emergency Level 4 - Purple of the Ohio Public Health Advisory System. This was a day that seemed unlikely just a few months ago, but we have seen a severe increase in cases of COVID-19 in October, November, and so far in December. We've seen hundreds of cases come into each health department daily as our contact tracers work to reach out to all of them. Our hospitals, sometimes overwhelmed, have persevered to provide quality care to all those impacted by this virus and those seeking other medical needs. We have also triggered all 7 Indicators of the state's system and the numbers continue to climb.

What can you do to help? There are several ways in which each of you can help our county turn the page on COVID-19 in our community. Trust us, we need you now more than ever. You are on the front line of this fight as well.

1. Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds with soap and warm water.
2. Wear a mask or facial covering to prevent the spread to others.
3. Keep a social distance of 6 feet between you and others when you have to be in public.
4. Stay home if you are sick, limit your time in public, and do not host or attend gatherings.

They may seem simple and yes, we've urged you to take these precautions before but following them will help fight this invader. Sometimes we get caught up in the gloom of this current situation that we forget there is hope. It is all around us in Stark County. We see it in the nurses and doctors helping people fight for their lives daily. We see it in the work that our non-profits do to go above and beyond to help those most in need. We see it in the businesses who have found inventive ways to still pay employees, let those who can work from home, and keep our economy moving forward. We see it in the parents or guardians who help their child log on to virtual school to keep learning. We see it in the teachers, administrators, and support staff that keep our schools safe for our children. Finally, we see hope in each one of you that is willing to take precautions, make sacrifices, and gently remind your family and friends of the seriousness of COVID-19. We need everyone to take a stand against this virus.

The COVID-19 Response Team members include, Alliance City Health Department, Aultman Hospital, City of Canton, Cathedral of Life Church, City of Canal Fulton, Canton City Health Department, City of Louisville, City of North Canton, Emergency Management Agency, Educational Service Center, Massillon City Health Department, Mercy Medical Center, Stark County Commissioners, Stark County Economic Development Board, Stark County Health Department, Stark County Prosecutor, Stark County Sheriff's Office, and Stark County Township Association.